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Research Report DFE-RR233

Department for Education

Social Work Practices: Report of the National Evaluation

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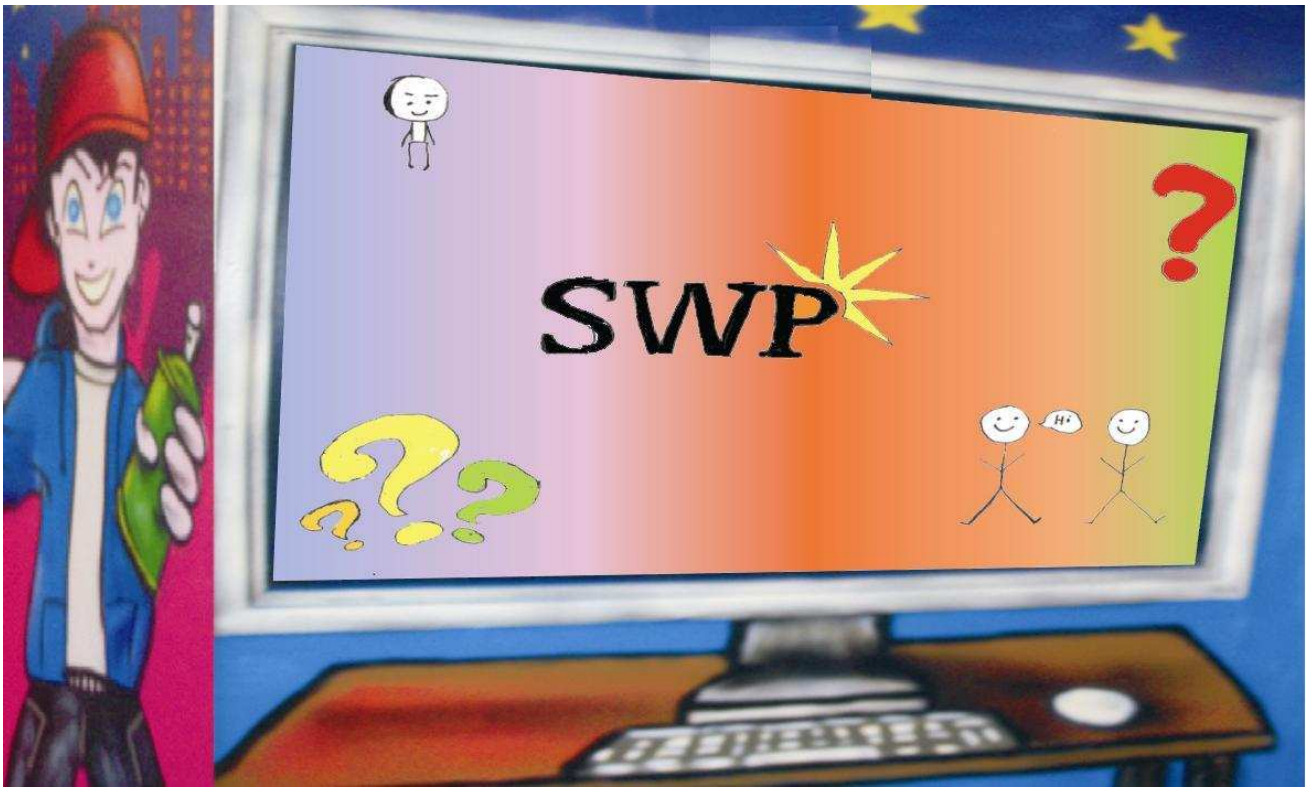
This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DfE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.



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The design above was contributed by young people from the evaluation's Young People's Advisory Group.

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The Social Work Practice Pilots

Five social work practice (SWP) pilots started up in England between December 2009 and May 2010. These independent organisations were commissioned by local authorities to provide services for looked after children and care leavers. The pilots were introduced to discover whether smaller social work-led organisations independent of local authorities could improve the morale and retention of social workers and bring decision making closer to front-line practice. These changes were expected to deliver increased consistency and stability of care for looked after children and care leavers. The pilots have differed substantially in their organisational forms and their origins and in the numbers and profiles of looked after children and young people they support (the Cohort). The SWPs comprised:

SWP A An in-house SWP which has remained within the local authority as a separate and discrete unit. Cohort of 180 young people aged 14-21.

SWP B A professional practice run as a private company by an organisation that already delivered social care training. Cohort of 80 children and young people aged 8-17 with high levels of need.

SWP C A voluntary organisation already providing the local authority's care leaving service. Taking on the attributes of an SWP was a gradual process for an already established service. Cohort of 582 young people aged 16-24 at start-up (increased to 727 by Nov 2011).

SWP D An SWP run by a voluntary organisation with a long history of providing services for local authorities. The SWP was a new venture for this organisation and staff were recruited specifically to this service. Cohort of 120 children and young people aged 0-17.

SWP F A professional practice run as a social enterprise established by a group of social work practitioners who formerly worked for the host local authority and who moved out to form the SWP, taking with them responsibility for many of the children with whom they already worked. Cohort of 148 children and young people aged 8 and above.

A sixth pilot failed to start as the local authority was diverted by an Ofsted inspection report that required it to focus on its core functions. At May 2012, three pilots looked set to continue until at least 2013 when contracts for those outside the local authority come up for renewal. However, two of the pilots had learnt that the local authorities would not be renewing their contracts and plans for returning these children and young people to the care of the local authorities were in place.

The Evaluation

An independent evaluation was commissioned by the Department for Education (formerly the Department for Children, Schools and Families) to:

1. analyse the advantages and disadvantages of the overall Social Work Practice concept, and the specific benefits (or otherwise) of the different models employed and any lessons for alternate models;
2. identify the impact of SWP pilots on children, their carers and their families;
3. discover the impact of the SWP model on the children's social care workforce;
4. identify the impact of SWP pilots on statutory child care social work in the host local authorities and on the work of other agencies.

The evaluation employed a matched control design with integral process evaluation; the local authorities piloting SWPs were matched with six carefully selected comparison sites. A wide range of data has been collected and brought together for analysis including:

- 225 interviews with looked after children and care leavers – 121 children and young people were interviewed from the pilots (56 were interviewed twice) and 48 from comparison sites.
- 31 interviews with SWP Staff (in 2010 and 2011; 12 were interviewed twice), interviews with 7 SWP Project Officers, 10 Local Authority Commissioners and 13 interviews with members of the SWP Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG).
- Interviews with 11 young people involved in SWP governance at different points in time.
- Interviews with 19 birth parents of children and young people looked after by SWPs.
- Interviews with 22 professionals from a range of social, education and health care agencies and with 21 Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) in the five pilot sites.
- 45 care plans from pilots and comparison sites were analysed and compared.
- Data supplied by the pilots on their looked after children and workforce.
- Analysis of data on key measures included in the DfE's SSDA903 returns for the pilot and comparison sites.
- On-line baseline (1101 responses) and second (949 responses) surveys of local authority practitioners in the pilot and comparison sites
- Carers' baseline (1,782 responses) and second (1,676 responses) postal surveys of foster carers, kin carers and managers of residential homes and supported lodgings across the pilot and comparison sites.

Key Findings

The evaluation has yielded mixed findings with stronger evidence in relation to some aspects of the pilots' work than in others. The views of stakeholders, such as IROs, other professionals, local authority commissioners and EAG members, as to whether the SWPs performed better than their local authority counterparts or whether they represented good value were divided. There were also variations found in perceptions of different pilots with some emerging as stronger performers than others.

Despite this variety, there is some evidence of positive change for children, parents, carers and the workforce that can be attributed to the pilots and this is highlighted below.

The Role of the Local Authority

> *"If you were to analyse all the Social Work Practices that are working very well it's because they have a good relationship with the local authority."* (SWP Staff Member)

The partnership with the local authority was fundamental to the survival and achievements of the SWPs who were reliant on local authorities for a range of services, expertise and support.

The in-house SWP, which was the pilot that was most dependent on the parent local authority, emerged as a viable model while the other pilots depended on the parent local authority for various key functions such as out-of-hours services, IT systems, rental of premises and equipment, training, supervision, legal services, access to psychological services for children and advice on complex cases and child protection issues. Reliance on the local authority constrained the autonomy of the pilots to differing extents: in particular, only one SWP had full control over the placement budget. In the light of this, it is difficult to see how SWPs would function were local authorities to move all their children's services out into SWPs as some local authorities are reportedly contemplating. In the case of such a scenario, some of the core functions and expertise of the local authorities essential for the success of SWPs would be lost.

Commissioning SWPs

> *'They were just finding the process difficult in terms of the amount of work and when they actually got the tender document and saw what they had do to produce in terms of getting everything ready, they baulked at that…'* (Project Manager)

Commissioning was experienced as an arduous process for all concerned despite the support provided by government appointed consultants. Small groups of social workers who came together to bid for a professional partnership were disadvantaged and dissuaded by the time required and their lack of business experience. Larger organisations with the infrastructure to support the bidding process fared better.

The Professional Partnership Model

The two pilots that were most frequently and consistently described as respectively successful and failing by stakeholders were both professional partnerships. That is, they were small organisations run by social workers themselves. However, the pilot that was consistently identified as successful was a social enterprise established by social workers moving out of the local authority and the other was a private profit-making company run by social workers who already operated a social care business. A key factor distinguishing these two pilots was the closeness and strength of the relationship with the relevant local authority.

SWP Finances

While this evaluation did not include a full cost-benefit analysis, local authority commissioners did not consider that the pilots had reduced costs and, in some cases, costs were considered to be higher than those of the equivalent in-house service. The impact of local government spending cuts on SWPs was discernible in decisions to terminate contracts while higher numbers of looked after children led to demands for them to add to SWP numbers resulting in larger caseloads for some pilots in the second year.

Payment by Results (PBR)

This was a controversial aspect of the original SWP model that attracted considerable criticism. In the event, only two SWPs used it and this was in relation to savings on the placement budget rather than outcomes for LAC and care leavers. Only three local authorities monitored pilot outcomes for children and young people systematically and it therefore seems unlikely that pilot staff were motivated to deliver a higher quality service by a system of rewards, although in the two sites that used PBR there was an incentive to select cheaper placements.

Round-the-Clock Services

The requirement for SWPs to provide a round-the-clock service was identified as a disincentive for organisations bidding for pilots and impacted on the cost of the pilots. Only two sites were

providing their own out-of-hours services by 2012. Children and young people reported making limited use of out-of-hours services and, when they did, this usually took the form of informal contact with their individual worker. It was notable that this informal out-of-hours contact also occurred in some comparison sites.

Small is Beautiful but Risky

> *'…even the receptionist lady, I can phone her up and she knows who I am, I can speak to her about anything.'* (Parent)

In common with other studies, various benefits were associated with small size. Children, young people and parents valued the flexibility and accessibility of a small service where they were known to staff. Small size allowed SWP team members to acquire familiarity with one another's cases and was reported to facilitate decision-making. Other professionals also found it easier to 'know' and collaborate with a small team.

However, the small size of the SWPs made for a reliance on individuals in key roles such as managers or administrators and acted to restrict pilots' autonomy with regard to finances since it was agreed that control of the volatile placement budget was too risky a proposition for a small organisation. Being a small venture also made SWPs risky for staff since reliance on a single contract made for threats to job security.

Time Allocation and Caseload Size

> *'Having a smaller caseload frees up me to work more directly with not only the young person but with foster carers, parents and other professionals.'* (Practitioner, SWP)

SWP staff were more likely than staff in local authorities to consider that they spent the right amount of time in direct work with children and families and they explained this as a consequence of smaller caseloads. Most (but not all) pilots were able to ensure that staff had caseloads of less than 18 and the practitioner survey found that pilot staff were more likely than other respondents to report having sufficient time for direct work with children, families and carers. Likewise, some professionals and parents described pilot staff as having more time to devote to direct work with children and families. An exclusive and concentrated focus on looked after children and young people also appeared helpful. With the exception of the in-house team, SWP staff did not take full responsibility for complex child protection cases.

Interprofessional Work

There was evidence from the analysis of care plans and from other professionals that the pilots worked well with a wide range of other professionals and agencies. In some cases, these relationships were fostered by having specialist staff such as mental health or Connexions workers located in the SWP teams.

Choosing SWPs

> *'They had no choice, we all had no choice, we had to move over.'* (18 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

For many (but not all) the children and young people, the move to an SWP involved disruption in the form of a change of key worker. Most children and young people did not appear to have exercised choice in relation to transferring to the pilots and none of their parents were offered choices about the move. Children and young people had limited understanding of the role of SWPs although awareness was higher when staff had moved out of the local authority alongside the children and young people.

A small number of children and young people expressed anger about their lack of involvement in the decision and regarded the move to the pilot as yet another change that had been imposed on them. It is important that those children selected for inclusion in an SWP are fully consulted about the change, that the reasons are clearly explained to them individually and that their views are taken into account.

Continuity and Consistency

Interviews with children and young people suggested that pilot children were more likely to have experienced continuity of worker in the last year and staff turnover figures supplied by the pilots confirmed this picture for three of the smaller pilots. However, in the SWP which was larger and in the SWP where there were ongoing difficulties, staff turnover was higher.

Furthermore, as noted above, the move to SWPs involved a change of worker for the majority of the children and young people and a further change of key worker was anticipated for most of the children and young people in the two SWPs where contracts were ending in 2012.

Most of the SWPs were successful in reducing placement change rates for children and young people in their first year of operation. Interviews with children and young people indicated that age and suitability of placement were key factors contributing to placement change.

A More Responsive Service?

> *'…she'll always try and get that bit more if I need it for something, or if I ask for it, she always does.' (17-19 year old, male care leaver, SWP)*

> *'she just, she goes out of her way like for people.'*
>
> (17-19 year old, male care leaver, comparison site)

Children's and young people's accounts showed no differences between pilots and comparison sites in terms of allocated workers' accessibility and responsiveness. Most found it easy to contact their worker, although there were some differences between pilots. Likewise, there were no substantial differences found between SWPs and local authority teams regarding the quality of children's relationships with allocated workers or their satisfaction with support. Some staff in both types of service were described as 'going the extra mile' in the provision of support.

SWP staff considered that shared responsibility for decision making made for speedier decisions and carers looking after SWP children were more likely than other carers to consider that the social worker had often been able to take key decisions in the previous six months.

Children's perceptions of SWP staff decision making were mixed. While most references to instant or quicker decision making came from SWP children and young people, there were also slightly more comments about delays in decision making from pilot children and young people than from those in comparison sites.

Contact and Birth Families

> *'we chose what we wanted to do when we wanted contact and they all said it was our choice, and then they gave us some money and stuff so we could like do activities or whatever … they arranged like transport.'*
>
> (18 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

In line with other research findings, contact with birth families emerged as a key preoccupation for children and young people and their parents. Some pilots adopted a particular focus on the needs of birth parents and the facilitation and support of contact. Carers were particularly positive about SWP staff's work with birth families in relation to some pilots.

Parents valued staff who acknowledged their needs as well as those of their children and were more satisfied with contact arrangements when they were involved in making decisions about contact. Slightly more children and young people in SWPs were satisfied with arrangements for contact than in comparison sites, but levels of satisfaction varied considerably between pilots.

Children's Participation

> *"I'm meeting lots of people, I'm …meeting new people and new experience…"* (17 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Most children and young people had no or very limited understanding of the role and tasks of SWPs; awareness was higher among children and young people in SWP F where staff and children had moved to the pilot together. SWPs involved children and young people in a range of participation activities which contributed to their personal development and sometimes offered them opportunities to contribute to the service development. The young people concerned enjoyed these activities and felt they had an impact on their social skills, and sometimes on service delivery. Such participation was not unique to the SWPs as young people in the comparison sites reported participating in similar activities.

Analysis of care plans showed that most children were involved in reviews and there were some examples in both SWPs and comparison sites of innovative approaches to involving children in these meetings. Children and young people in SWP D were more likely to feel that their reviews had improved since joining the SWP.

User-friendly Buildings

> *'I just chill there and watch telly and like there's all these kids like, well not kids, like my age, playing pool'* (14-16 year old, looked after girl, SWP)

Where a tightly-drawn catchment area made it viable for pilots to offer this, user-friendly premises that provided space and resources that young people could drop in and use as well as facilities for active contact sessions were appreciated by children, young people and their families. Knowing and being 'known' to other SWP staff gave children and families a stake in SWPs and contributed to a view of the pilots as accessible, personalised services; this perception was shared by IROs and other professionals. A central location was important as well as attractive décor and furnishings and offices that young people could access without encountering security barriers were particularly appreciated.

Impact of SWPs on Carers

Carers looking after SWP children were significantly more likely than carers looking after local authority children to view the support they received from their child's social worker positively. They also felt better supported by SWP staff in assisting children and young people in the areas of health, education or leisure activities.

Impact of SWPs on the Workforce

SWP staff participating in the practitioner survey reported feeling more positive about their work and were more likely to feel that they spent enough time in direct work with children, families and carers. They also scored lower on 'depersonalisation' than staff from local authorities, an indication of higher morale. However, this difference was not found in relation to other aspects of job satisfaction such as staff satisfaction and decision latitude. SWP staff did however report higher levels of peer and supervisor support and this may be linked to their small size.

The survey findings also point to the risks of SWP staff experiencing job insecurity and this conflicts with an emphasis on continuity of support for looked after children and young people.

Longer term contracts may be one solution and in-house SWPs offer another way forward; longer-term research would be helpful in this respect.

Key Messages for the Development of SWPs

- SWP set-up and operation are facilitated by a trusting relationship between the local authority and the SWP providers. This could be promoted by sharing essential details concerning the nature of the proposed cohort as part of the tender process. The development of a checklist detailing transfer requirements such as up-to-date case files and functioning IT systems would assist both local authorities and SWP providers.

- Implementation has seen considerable dilution or adaptation of the original theoretical SWP model. Some controversial aspects of the original SWP model, such as payment by results and a round-the-clock service for looked after children, have not been consistently retained. Since these were the source of resistance and concerns about SWPs, continued insistence on their inclusion in the model seems inappropriate.

- It is important that those children selected for inclusion in an SWP are fully consulted about the change and that their views are taken into account. Feelings of disempowerment and dissatisfaction might be avoided by ensuring that the possible risks and benefits of a proposed move to an SWP are fully discussed with children and young people on an individual basis beforehand.

Key Messages for Services for Looked After Children and Young People

- User-friendly buildings can play a role in eliciting higher levels of engagement from children and young people who live locally. Children and their families value being recognised and welcomed by staff; sharing information about cases within a social work team can facilitate this sense of being known to the organisation.

- Small teams appear supportive and make for a flexible and personalised service. Co-locating specialist staff such as mental health workers in these teams promotes interagency communication and collaboration.

- Reduced caseloads and an exclusive focus on looked after children both have the effect of freeing up time that can be used to improve the quality and focus of work with looked after children and young people and their families. Reduced caseloads also have a positive effect on staff morale.

- A focus on contact and the needs of birth parents reflects the concerns of children and their families and contributes to satisfaction with the service. This does not necessarily mean increasing contact, but rather providing the practical and emotional support required to meet the difficulties that are associated with contact.

Summing Up

The achievements of the SWP pilots can be summarised as increased opportunities for direct work with children and young people; good quality support for carers and small integrated teams offering a personalised service and in some cases creative work with birth parents and/or the use of accessible and user-friendly premises. In most pilots, but not in all, a reduction in the rate of placement change was achieved. However, continuity of key worker was not consistently

achieved, particularly since the contracted out nature of the service involved some children and young people experiencing disruption as a consequence of transfer both in and out of SWPs. The lack of information and choice children reported in relation to such changes was concerning. Children and young people in SWPs did not appear to find staff more responsive or accessible than their counterparts in the comparison sites.

A number of confounding factors make it difficult to attribute positive outcomes solely to the SWP model. This is particularly the case given that the SWP model was implemented in diluted form with the dilution becoming more pronounced in some sites where numbers of children and young people increased during the life of the pilot. SWP staff and other stakeholders identified reduced caseloads as salient and the level of support from the local authority was found to be crucial in many respects. A tight remit and a clear focus on the looked after/care leaver population without responsibility for child protection work also emerged as factors contributing to increased opportunities for direct work.

Although the SWP model's characteristics of a flattened hierarchy and staff involvement in decision making were unevenly implemented, this approach, together with higher levels of supervision, more opportunities for direct work and the sense of being a new and 'special' project engendered by pilots appeared to contribute to SWP staff's positive perceptions. However, higher levels of morale may have been offset by the increased risk of job insecurity in the context of a short term contracted out service.

Introduction

Social Work Practices (SWPs) have generated considerable comment and debate in England since their inception; this report is the first full evaluation of their implementation and impact covering the period December 2009 to March 2012. This introduction describes the background to the introduction of the pilot SWPs in England in 2009/10; outlines their key characteristics and describes the evaluation's aims and methods. The coverage of this report is identified for the reader.

The Background

Despite much attention in government policy to improving services for children who are looked after by local authorities, looked after children (LAC) in England continue to be at high risk of poor outcomes (Stein 2006, Dixon 2008). Compared with other young people, care leavers are more likely to be unemployed (Wade and Dixon 2006), to gain fewer qualifications, to experience mental health problems (Meltzer et al. 2003), be imprisoned (Social Exclusion Unit 2002), and to become teenage parents (SCIE 2004). Government has acknowledged that progress towards improved outcomes for looked after children remains slow and has emphasised children's needs for continuity and consistency (Department for Education and Skills 2007) while research (Stanley et al. 2005; Stanley 2007; Unrau et al. 2008) has highlighted the absence of continuity as a key factor contributing to the poor mental health and emotional needs of looked after children. The accessibility and availability of social workers have been identified as a key issue for both looked after children and their carers (Statham et al. 2006; Sinclair et al. 2004). Dickson et al.'s (2009) review of studies that captured the views of looked after children themselves found that looked after children and young people wanted continuity in their relationships with social workers and valued professionals who took an interest in them and listened to them. Changes of social worker represent one sort of disturbance, but changes of placement also characterise the experience of being looked after and affect children's lives at a fundamental level. Ward's (2009) longitudinal study showed that the majority of placement changes experienced by children in her sample were attributable to resource shortfalls and poor planning.

Garrett (2008) argues that characterisation of the looked after system as a 'failing system' does not take account of the complexity and variety of experiences that the care system encompasses. In this, he draws on the arguments of researchers such as Stein (2006) and Forrester et al. (2009) who have proposed that outcomes for different groups of looked after children need to be carefully differentiated and that outcomes for looked after children reflect the needs that bring them into the care system. A recent study of the reunification of children with their birth families (Wade et al. 2011) found that outcomes in respect of stability and well-being were better for those children who remained in care than for the matched group who returned home. It is also the case that while continuity of care has emerged as central to the quality of a wide range of health and social care organisations (Haggerty et al. 2003), it remains an elusive goal for many services.

The piloting of SWPs was first proposed in the *Care Matters* Green Paper (Department for Education and Skills 2006). SWPs were described in the Green Paper as autonomous organisations, similar to GP practices, which would contract with local authorities to provide services to looked after children. They could take a variety of organisational forms such as voluntary or community organisations, social enterprises or private businesses. The aim was for social workers to be freed from the restrictions of local authority procedures and high caseloads to enable them to focus their efforts and energies on looked after children. The

report of the working party chaired by academic and policy adviser, Professor Julian Le Grand (2007), provided the platform for the implementation of SWPs arguing that smaller social worker-led organisations, independent of local authorities, could improve the morale and retention of social workers and would bring decision making closer to front-line practice. These changes were expected to deliver a level of consistency and stability of care for looked after children and care leavers that had proved difficult to achieve (DfES 2007). However, as the report noted, the question of whether social workers in SWPs would have more 'hands-on time for building relationships with looked after children, remains open' (Le Grand 2007: 24).The legislative framework for piloting SWPs was established by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 under the New Labour Government. This legislation permitted local authorities to delegate their functions in relation to looked-after children and care leavers to SWPs although the responsible local authority would continue to be the 'corporate parent' for such children and young people. The Act allowed for SWPs to be piloted in a number of local authorities for a period lasting up to five years and required that they would be evaluated. Subject to the evaluation's findings, the power to delegate these functions might be extended to all local authorities.

The SWP pilots have proved controversial although services such as residential child care and independent fostering agencies have been outsourced for many years (Sellick 2011). This is because introducing SWPs entailed moving some aspects of the statutory roles and tasks of children's social workers outside the local authority into independent organisations. The introduction of SWPs was described by critics as the privatisation of children's welfare services and the commodification of children (Cardy 2010; Garrett 2008). Questions were raised about whether the pilots would consult sufficiently with looked after children and their parents (Garrett 2008). Cardy (2010) suggested that practitioners might lack the business skills and knowledge to develop and run an independent SWP and queried whether enough attention had been paid to calculating costs and risks.

Six pilots were originally identified by the DCSF and five started up in 2009-10; this process is described in the following chapter. At the time of writing this report in March 2012, four of the original six SWP pilots were functioning as independent SWPs. One of the original six failed to start up as the local authority was diverted by an Ofsted (regulatory) report that required it to refocus on its core functions and which resulted in major restructuring of children's social care services in that authority. The start-up of the sixth SWP was delayed until May 2010 by the mode of governance proposed for the pilot which was considered to lack sufficient independence from the local authority to meet the statutory framework for SWPs. The local authority subsequently decided to keep the pilot within its Children's Services department as a separate unit operating in accordance with SWP principles. A number of local circumstances appear to have contributed to this decision, including concerns about the potential risks for a small local authority of placing a substantial proportion of its Children's Services budget outside the local authority in a climate of public sector cuts.

At the time of writing, three of the five existing SWP pilots look set to continue until at least 2013 when contracts for those outside the local authority come up for renewal. However, two of the pilots have learnt that their contracts will not be renewed in 2012. In one site, there have been serious concerns about the performance of the pilot; in the other, financial considerations on the part of the local authority have resulted in the pilot functions and staff being taken back into the local authority's Children's Services department.

As shown in Table 1, the pilots differed substantially in their origins, their organisational forms and the groups of looked after children and young people with whom they worked. As noted above, SWP A has remained within the local authority as an in-house model. SWP F was a

professional partnership organised as a social enterprise. It was established by a group of social work practitioners who formerly worked for the host local authority and who moved into an SWP, together with many of the children they already worked with. SWP B was also a professional partnership but was run as a private company by an organisation that also delivered social care training. New staff were head-hunted and recruited to the SWP; none had been previously employed by the relevant local authority. SWP C was run by a large voluntary organisation which was already providing the local authority's care leaving service. Taking on the attributes of an SWP was a gradual process for this already established service. SWP D was run by a large voluntary organisation with a long history of providing services for the host local authority. However, this was a new venture for this organisation and staff were recruited specifically to this service.

Table 1 – The Five SWP Pilots at Start-Up

Pilot	SWP Model	Cohort of children and young people at start	Start-up Date
SWP A	In-house model	c. 80 LAC (no. of care leavers not available) Age group: 14-21	May 2010
SWP B	Professional Partnership (For profit organisation)	c. 80 children and young people with high levels of need Age group: 8-17	November 2009
SWP C	Third Sector model (Established voluntary organisation – already providing care leavers' service in this local authority)	582 young people (176 LAC; 406 care leavers) Age group: 16-24	December 2009
SWP D	Third Sector model (Established voluntary organisation)	120 children and young people Age group:0-17	December 2009
SWP F	Professional Partnership (Social enterprise)	148 children and young people Age group 8+	November 2009

The Evaluation

Aims and Methodology

The evaluation was structured around four key aims:

1. To analyse the advantages and disadvantages of the overall Social Work Practice concept, and the specific benefits (or otherwise) of the different models employed and any lessons for alternate models;
2. To identify the impact of SWP pilots on children, their carers and their families;
3. To discover the impact of the SWP model on the children's social care workforce;
4. To identify the impact of SWP pilots on statutory child care social work in the host local authorities and on the work of other agencies.

A matched control design with integral process evaluation has been employed; this is considered the most rigorous evaluation approach where a randomised control trial is not possible (Breslow 1996). Six local authorities[1] were selected as comparison sites for the pilot sites according to a set of essential criteria supplemented by desirable criteria. These are described in the following section.

The matched control design provides a framework for examining both the processes of planning and implementing SWPs and delivering services to looked after children and the impact of SWPs on looked after children, their carers and families. The impact of SWPs on the children's social care workforce and on organisations, including the host local authorities and other local social care, education and health agencies, has also been examined. As Table 1 shows, there has been a high level of variation in the intervention evaluated and members of the Expert Advisory Group appointed by the DCSF (now the Department for Education (DfE)) to advise the evaluation team acknowledged the challenges this presented for the evaluation.

As recommended by Jowell's (2003) review of government pilots, a mixed methods approach has been adopted and this allows quantitative and qualitative data to complement and enhance one another. The evaluation captures a range of perspectives including the views of children and young people, families, carers, local authority social workers and SWP staff, as well as professionals working in other agencies. The methodology recognises the complexity of the question 'what works?' (Pawson and Tilley 1997) and acknowledges the range of impacts which SWP pilots may have for diverse groups of stakeholders.

Ethical approval for the evaluation was provided by the Institute of Education's Research Ethics Committee and from research governance committees in local authorities. The Association of Directors of Children's Services Research Committee also positively reviewed the study. All those participating in the evaluation were provided with accessible information about the evaluation and its purposes and informed consent procedures were adopted. Looked after children, care leavers and birth parents were provided with gift vouchers to acknowledge their time and interest. Care has been taken to anonymise all participants in this report and data have been stored securely.

The evaluation aimed to ensure that the views of key stakeholders were fed into both the research design and the interpretation of findings. The study was advised by an Evaluation

[1] Six comparison sites were selected since there were originally six pilots planned

Advisory Group (EAG) initially convened by the DCSF and subsequently supported by the DfE; its members are listed in Appendix 1. In addition, the evaluation held annual Stakeholders Workshops attended by representatives of the pilots; the local authorities hosting the pilots and the comparison sites. These workshops were run in parallel with a Young People's Advisory Group which has included looked after young people and care leavers from the pilots who commented on research tools and discussed emerging findings.

Constructing Samples and Collecting Data

Selecting Comparison Sites

Comparison sites for the pilot local authorities were selected using two sets of criteria agreed with the Evaluation Advisory Group. These comprised essential and key criteria and included:

Essential Criteria

1. *General Demographic Criteria* - the ratings accorded to local authorities in the Children's Services Statistical Neighbour Benching Marking Tool (http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000712/index.shtml) which groups local authorities together according to socio-demographic criteria.

2. *Key characteristics of the local looked after populations* – the two DCSF indicators used for this were: LAA1 – Children looked after at 31st March, rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years and NI 62 - The percentage of children looked after at 31 March with three or more placements. The selection of these LAC criteria was informed by the DCSF report, *Regression Analysis on Children Looked After Stability National Indicators* (Winkworth 2009).

Key Criteria

1. *Workforce criteria* - the total social services social work vacancy rate as provided by a 2009 survey of local authorities carried out by Community Care (Maier 2009). The total social services social workers vacancy rate was chosen over Children's Services social worker vacancy rate as these data were more complete.

2. *Safeguarding criteria* – to capture the wider activity of Children's Services in relation to looked after children and to offer an indication of an authority's threshold for entry into the care system. DCSF indicator LAC6, Rates per 10,000 children who started being looked after during the year ending 31st March, was used for this purpose.

Where sites matched on all essential criteria, then those matching according to key criteria were selected and approached first. Directors of Children's Services at those sites providing good matches to SWP sites were contacted and invited to participate in the evaluation. Three agencies declined the offer to participate. Those interested were followed up and site meetings with senior managers were organised.

Interviews with LAC and Care Leavers

Eighty LAC and care leavers were interviewed face-to-face in four pilot sites in 2010 with the aim of capturing their views and experiences shortly after the move to the SWPs (see Appendix 2 for the interview schedule). Young people from SWP A had independently conducted a questionnaire survey of children's and young people's views during summer 2010 and this SWP chose not to participate in this aspect of the national evaluation. Each site supplied demographic characteristics of their cohort (or in SWP C, a random sample of one in six of their cohort). The evaluators purposively sampled Black and minority ethnic (BME) and disabled young people since these were considered 'harder to reach' groups. We sampled the rest by quota across the following categories: gender; age category (education key stages; care leavers); education, training or employment category; length of time in care; number of moves in last year; type of placement or accommodation. Children and young people selected for interview were contacted by the relevant SWP staff. Around half those initially selected were unavailable or refused an interview and had to be substituted with another child/young person with a similar/matched profile. The majority of refusals came from older teenagers, though not all. SWP staff reported a range of reasons for refusals including that the child/young person's had chosen not to participate; that children and young people with learning difficulties or autism would be unlikely to understand the purpose of the interview or that this was a particularly difficult time in the child/young person's life.

In 2011, 97 LAC and care leavers were interviewed in the pilots with children and young people from SWP A participating in this set of interviews. Where possible, those interviewed in 2010 were interviewed a second time: 56 of these interviews were second interviews. Where it was not possible to interview the same person twice, a substitute child or young person was selected for interview who matched the original interviewee on the key characteristics described above. Additionally, 48 children and young people were interviewed in the comparison sites; while the evaluators requested that these children be selected to reflect the distribution of key characteristics across the SWP sample, it was not always possible to achieve an exact match since the researchers were dependent on comparison site managers and practitioners acting as 'gatekeepers' (see Munro et al. 2005).

Interviews with SWP Staff, SWP Project Officers and Local Authority Commissioners

Three members of staff from each of the pilots were interviewed twice, first in 2010, then in 2011, and an additional three members of staff were interviewed in 2011 to reflect staff changes[2]. In each pilot, the manager, a qualified social worker and a member of staff without a social work qualification (a Personal Adviser or Family Support Worker) were interviewed face-to-face; in total, 31 interviews were completed with SWP staff. Five Project Managers and two Children's Service Managers with responsibility for introducing and setting-up the pilots were also interviewed in 2009 with the aim of capturing their views on the early processes of implementing the pilots. In 2011-12, nine local authority commissioners from the five pilot local authorities were interviewed to provide a longer-term perspective on the process of commissioning and managing the SWP contracts.

[2] Space considerations have made it impossible to include copies of all interview schedules used for the evaluation. Copies of this and other interview schedules together with the information sheets used with participants are available on request from the research team at NStanley@uclan.ac.uk.

Interviews with Young People Involved in Governance

Eleven young people aged between 15 and 20 years, who were identified by local authority project officers and pilot staff as involved in SWP governance, were interviewed face-to-face. Approximately half of these were male and half were female.

All five pilots were represented and interviews took place both at the pilots' start-up stage and subsequently with the aim of capturing young people's involvement at different stages in the pilots' development.

Interviews with Parents

Nineteen birth parents were interviewed face-to-face in the five pilot sites; they were selected for interview by SWP staff on the grounds that they had had a substantial amount of contact with the pilot, they had contact with their children and they would be willing and able to participate in a research interview. This approach to selection reflects the fact that birth parents are a difficult group to access for research.

Interviews with Other Professionals

Twenty-two professionals from a range of key agencies and from Children's Services were interviewed by telephone in late 2011 - early 2012 at a time when most pilots (with the exception of SWP A that started up late) had been operational for two years. These mainly constituted managers and practitioners who were nominated by the SWPs as professionals who had worked with the SWP although some were selected for interview by role, for example Virtual School Heads and Chairs of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). In selecting Children's Services managers for interview, we aimed to interview one manager responsible for safeguarding and one responsible for looked after children's teams in order to elicit their perceptions of collaboration and any impact of the pilot in their area.

Interviews with Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

Twenty-one IROs were nominated for interview by IRO Co-ordinators in the five pilot sites. The key criteria informing selection was that the IRO had relevant experience of chairing reviews for children looked after by SWPs. These interviews were carried out by telephone.

Interviews with EAG Members

EAG members played important but differing roles in influencing the SWP model and the development and implementation of the pilots. Interviews were conducted in 2009 and 2011/12 with 13 EAG members in total who included DfE staff, DCSF/DfE appointed consultants as well as researchers and other experts. Individuals were selected for interview with the aim of capturing a representative spread of roles and interests.

Care Plans

A sample of 45 case files - 25 from SWPs and 20 from comparison sites - was analysed with a view to examining the quality of documentation, planning and decision making. Files were accessed from Children's Services databases with consent from the children and young people concerned. A schedule was devised, piloted and used for identifying and storing anonymised data and the information extracted was then analysed using a framework based upon key themes identified in the literature on care planning (Thomas 2011).

Practitioners' Survey

The construction of the on-line survey of practitioners working with children and families drew on relevant literature and research on the social care workforce and included a range of questions relating to workload, time allocation and perceptions of autonomy and decision making, as well as two validated scales (see Appendix 3 for the on-line survey tool). Karasek's Job Content Questionnaire 'JCQ' measures a number of scales related to decision making authority, skills' discretion, support received from supervisor/manager and from colleagues (Karasek, 1976 and Karasek et al. 1998). The Maslach Burnout Inventory 'MBI' was employed to establish levels of elements contributing to job stress and burnout, namely: emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalisation (Maslach and Jackson 1984; Maslach and Leiter 2008). The survey was piloted and sent to all staff identified by local authorities as working with children and families in the six original pilot local authorities (in 2009 when the survey was distributed it was still envisaged that there would be six pilots) and six comparison sites in 2009-10 prior to start-up of the pilots. This Time 1 survey achieved a highly creditable 50% response rate (1101 returns from a total 2,203 valid email invitations). It was repeated in 2011 (Time 2) when pilot staff also participated in the survey and the response rate achieved was 43% (949 returns from a total 2,208 valid email invitations).

Carers' Survey

A postal survey of foster carers, kin carers, managers of residential homes and supported lodgings for care leavers was completed in the pilot local authorities and the comparison sites at two points in time (2009/10 and 2011). The design of the survey was informed by relevant research literature, incorporated consultation with the EAG and with IROs, and was piloted. Local authority staff assisted in compiling lists of all carers used by their local authority and all those identified received two postings of the questionnaire. The first baseline survey achieved a good response rate of 42% (1,782 returned from total posting of 4,241) with the second follow-up survey eliciting a response rate of 43% (1,676 returned from total posting of 3,890).

Secondary Data

The SWP pilots provided the evaluation team with statistical data relating to their cohorts of children and young people and their staffing. Local reports produced by the pilots were also made available to the evaluation team. The evaluators were also given access to the contracts signed by local authorities and SWPs.

The DfE supplied the evaluation team with SSDA903 returns for the host local authorities and comparison sites. SSDA903 returns are completed annually by local authorities for every child who is looked after and for a group of formerly looked after children whose 19th birthday fell during the same year. All looked after children and young people and 19 year-old care leavers who were on the caseloads of the SWP pilots were thus included in these returns. The DfE supplied these data for our host and comparison sites covering all children looked after during the reporting years 2009 to 2011. We additionally obtained unique child identification codes from the pilot sites to identify the children and young people looked after by the pilots. These data were used to provide a description of the children cared for by the pilots and how they differed from other children in the host local authorities. They also provide some evidence on performance although, because the 903 returns are collected in March at the end of the financial year, only one year's worth of these data, that for April 2010 to March 2011, covered the period when the pilots were operational. The findings from the analysis of these data are included in Appendix 4.

Analysis

All interviews were recorded with participants' permission, were transcribed and coded using themes emerging from the data as well as those identified from the literature that informed the interview schedules (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Evaluation team members worked in groups of two or three continuously checking and revising codes against the data. NVivo software was used to assist data sorting and storing.

The Carers' Survey data were double entered on SPSS to ensure a high level of accuracy. An ordinal logistic regressions analysis was used, employing Stata software, to determine intervention effects.

Data from the Practitioners' Survey were imported and analysed using R software version 2.1 (R Development Core Team 2007). The analysis involved several stages of descriptive and multi-variate analyses. Statistical techniques used addressed the clustering nature of responses employing hierarchical mixed-effect models to account for multi-level error structure. Responses to the small number of open questions included in the practitioners' survey were coded and qualitatively analysed.

The final analysis involved combining different types of data which allowed various stakeholders' perspectives on a particular issue to be contrasted and permits one form of data to be used to contextualise or explain another. The report aims to be explicit about the source of particular findings and conflicting evidence and perspectives are identified where found. The analysis has paid attention to the variation between pilots and, throughout this report, we highlight differences between them in terms of both their processes and outcomes as well as comparing outcomes in pilot sites with those in comparison sites.

Limitations

The evaluation encountered a high level of variation in the 'intervention' delivered in the different pilot sites. Such variations were found at a number of levels including: structure, provider, client or 'user' group and level of resources, both financial and staffing. Time constraints have made for difficulties in utilising 'hard' outcome measures such as government indicators for looked after children, with only a single year's worth of relevant data being available on the pilots' preformance. However, the large number of in-depth interviews completed with looked after children and young people go some way to compensate for this.

It is also important to acknowledge that the pilots have been provided with financial and consultancy support which has not been available to the comparison sites. These 'hidden subsidies' (EAG member) have been described in this report but their impact is hard to measure. Similarly, it is likely that the status attached to being a pilot that is the subject of national interest and evaluation will have affected the morale and commitment of pilot staff.

Different stakeholders brought varying levels of investment in the pilots to the task of the evaluation and this report has acknowledged this by reporting the views and perspectives of different groups separately. The time point at which views are captured is also relevant, especially when reporting on pilots that have only been in operation for two years. For instance, in Chapter 4, we note that children's perceptions of the quality of their relationships with their social workers improved over time. For this reason, the views of a number of informant groups were captured at two time-points.

The Changing Context of the Evaluation

The context of the evaluation has experienced rapid change with key developments taking place in relation to the size of the looked after children population, the demands on public services, workforce challenges and reform, and in (two) governments' policy priorities. The rising numbers and needs of looked after children are an on-going, major challenge for Children's Services. DfE figures, for the year ending March 2011, show that the total number of children looked after continues to increase with the 2011 figure representing the highest number since 1987 (DfE2011http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/datasets/a00196857/children-looked-after-by-las-in-england).

Increasing numbers make for greater demands on both organisations and individual practitioners. The Social Work Reform Board (2010) found that vacancies remained high and in November 2010, *Community Care* reported that one in six of the 89 local authorities surveyed had LAC either unallocated or allocated to a professional who was not a qualified social worker (Garboden 2010). This use of staff who are not qualified social workers to hold cases was raised by managers attending the evaluation's Stakeholder Seminar in November 2010; it is established practice for older care leavers but may be adopted for younger care leavers and LAC in this context of rising numbers.

The Munro Review (Munro 2011) emphasised the complexity of the decisions that social workers make about vulnerable children and highlighted the emotional and intellectual demands of the work. Staff retention in children's social care continues to be a key issue which government has sought to address (Social Work Task Force 2009; DfES and DH 2006). It impacts both on the workload and on the quality of service experienced by LAC and care leavers. New models are emerging in children's social care. The evaluation of the Reclaiming Social Work Initiative in the London Borough of Hackney (Cross et al. 2010) found that the introduction of small multi-skilled units achieved shifts in the organisational culture that impacted both on key indicators and on social work processes. CWDC's evaluation of the Remodelling Social Work Pilots (Baginsky et al. 2011) reported that reduced caseloads freed up staff time for more direct work with children and families, which made for earlier or more intensive interventions and the evaluation flagged up the value of flexible services based in familiar and accessible locations. NICE/SCIE guidance (NICE/SCIE 2010) emphasised the importance of attending to the mental health needs of LAC and care leavers and argued for integrated accessible services, delivered from one site that included expert resources, to address physical and emotional health needs.

The change of government in 2010 had a significant effect on the level of public interest in and wider significance of the SWP pilots. SWPs embody some of the key ideas of the Coalition Government such as 'the Big Society', the aim of reducing the size of the public sector as well as a means of exploring alternative models for delivering welfare services, such as social enterprises and mutual organisations (HM Government 2010). In consequence, the position of the DfE in relation to the pilots shifted from a neutral to a more proactively supportive stance. However, the evaluation team is made up of researchers who have taken an independent stance and have sought to let the evidence and the research participants speak for themselves.

Report Coverage

This report has been structured so that process data are reported first, followed by impact data. Since different groups of informants bring very different perspectives to bear on the work of the pilots, their views and experiences are reported separately with links and associations between different data sets emphasised throughout the report.

Chapter 1 reports on the commissioning and start-up of the pilots and includes information on the extent to which children exercised choice about transferring to SWPs. Chapter 2 reports on the operations of the pilots between 2010 and 2012, drawing on interviews with staff as well as interviews with children and young people which described their levels of knowledge and participation in the pilots, including their involvement in governance. Chapter 3 reports a range of perspectives on the work of SWPs, including the views of other local professionals, IRO perceptions, the assessments of local authority commissioners and an analysis of care plans undertaken in both pilot and comparison sites.

Chapter 4 reports on the impact of the pilots on children and young people, drawing on in-depth interviews with 174 children and young people in pilot and comparison sites. This is followed in Chapter 5 by an account of the views and experience of 19 birth parents of children and young people cared for by the SWPs. Chapter 6 reports on the large-scale surveys of carers views undertaken at baseline and follow-up. Chapter 7 describes the impact of the pilots on the workforce, again using two large-scale surveys to compare the experiences and views of pilot staff with those of staff in both the comparison sites and the 'host' local authorities where the pilots were located. The Conclusion summarises and discusses the key findings of the evaluation.

Examples of some of the key research tools used are available in Appendices 2 and 3. A detailed account of the analysis and findings of the SSDA903 data is provided in Appendix 4. Additional information and tables relating to the findings and analysis of the large scale carers' (Appendix 5) and practitioners' surveys (Appendix 6) are included as appendices to this report.

Chapter 1 –SWP Pilot Commissioning and Start-up

This chapter describes the commissioning and start-up phases of the pilots drawing on interviews undertaken with local authority project managers, pilot staff, local authority commissioners and Independent Reviewing Officers as well as interviews with children and young people and parents.

1.1 Commissioning SWPs

1.1.1 Local Authorities' Commissioning Processes

The DCSF and its appointed consultants put considerable effort into advertising the opportunity for local authorities to take up pilot status. However, despite a good level of initial expressions of interest, only five pilots, less than the nine anticipated by the DCSF, were established in 2009-10. EAG members noted that '*we were challenged to find providers*'. Barriers that were identified to finding pilot sites included: opposition within local authorities to outsourcing elements of Children's Services, especially to private companies motivated by profit; a perception by Children's Services managers that splitting off LAC services had the potential to destabilise the wider service; and a fear amongst managers of losing budgetary control over a service working with a high risk clientele in a context where the local authority retained responsibility for corporate parenting. A similar pattern has been experienced with the launches of subsequent waves[3] of SWPs.

Local authorities were motivated to participate in the pilots for a range of reasons which included improving the service provided for LAC, the desire to be innovative and to reduce bureaucracy - to see whether a *'more professional model without layers of bureaucracy and the pressures of a large organisation is workable'*. SWPs were perceived to offer the potential for achieving a more stable workforce with the promise of improved consistency for LAC. Resource considerations were also influential: there were hopes that establishing the SWP pilot would free up some capacity within local authorities as well as the prospect of obtaining additional financial resources - approximately £200,000 per annum start-up funding was available over a period of three years for local authorities participating in the pilots. These amounts differed between sites since local authorities had to bid for and justify the need for this central government support. Commissioners in most sites made it clear that it would not have been feasible to establish the pilots in the absence of government start-up funding. Support from the DCSF and their consultants represented an opportunity to improve services. In some authorities, one individual had been particularly influential in encouraging the local authority's submission of a bid for an SWP pilot.

The participating local authorities established Project Boards to manage the strategic implementation of the pilots and used the start-up funding provided by the DCSF to appoint project managers who took responsibility for the operational implementation of the pilots. Most project managers were independent consultants on short term contracts; in one local authority the post was offered as a secondment. Project managers took a lead in the commissioning process and then assisted the appointed provider to set up the pilot and played a key role in the

[3] Two new waves of SWPs are in the process of being established by the DfE in up to four local authority children's departments; these include a diverse range of organisations including those in fostering and adoption, and arms-length as well as fully independent pilots.

preparation and transfer of the cohort of children and young people. The majority had a background in social work management or social work consultancy.

The commissioning process was generally experienced as arduous by all those involved including local authority staff. This was in part because of the time restrictions imposed by the DCSF timetable which was shaped by the legislative framework. One EAG member commented:

> *'most local authorities,[when] procuring the providers to provide a service for three or four million pounds, would spend eighteen months on that procurement, whereas we'd ask them to do it between January and June, we'd ask them to do it in six months. And a lot of the local authorities have struggled with that.'*
>
> (EAG member)

Commissioning SWPs was also new and challenging territory for local authorities, very much a *'blank sheet*' as one Project Manager observed. The support of the DCSF appointed consultants in this respect was highly valued, especially by the local authority project managers. These consultants provided guidance to local authorities that included support to assist them with the procurement process and with making financial calculations on which to base the SWP budgets, but the consultants also provided (in partnership with a firm of solicitors) a model contract which most local authorities used as the basis for the contracts agreed with the pilot SWPs.

Existing procedures designed to commission services such as children's residential provision needed to be adapted to suit the needs of procuring an SWP, and at times, such procedures (especially contract documentation) were said to be *'out of kilter'* with the SWP concept. For instance, standard contracts were generally not outcomes-based. While local authority commissioners generally had positive support from their corporate departments, scrutiny by legal and finance departments was experienced as challenging and was described as contributing to delays; one local authority manager felt '*we were being put through a mincer by legal, commissioning and finance to a certain extent.'*

Project managers interviewed highlighted the need to ensure that procurement systems were demonstrably fair. In practice, this meant adopting established procedures and, for instance, providing detailed feedback to all bidders even those who had not been successful. Delays in the planned timetable of up to ten months occurred in both the appointment of the preferred supplier and in finalising the contract.

The SWP business model favoured by the Social Care Practices Working Group was the professional partnership model, although the report anticipated that existing voluntary or private sector organisations might bid to provide pilots (Le Grand 2007). Some local authorities also favoured particular governance models, which influenced the tendering process significantly. For example, the local authority that wanted to pilot a third sector model with an existing provider advertised the tender specifically to voluntary sector organisations it already worked with. Another that aimed to commission a social enterprise model precluded bids from private or voluntary sector organisations by specifying that it sought an organisational structure with at least 50% ownership by qualified social workers to meet the requirement for the SWP to be social worker led. Only one local authority decided to adopt a completely open procurement process and consequently received interest from 16 organisations, four of which went on to submit bids. Another local authority decided not to enter into the standard procurement process

but *'turned the procurement process on its head*' by inviting bidders to submit ideas about the approach that they would take to delivering an SWP. While this approach was considered to stimulate innovation, it also resulted in a lack of clarity and, from the Union perspective, a lack of transparency. Where local authorities struggled to identify bidders, DCSF appointed consultants played a role in stimulating interest and bids, using their networks of contacts.

A thorny issue highlighted by consultants working with both local authorities and providers at the commissioning stage was the extent of decision making and budgetary responsibility delegated to the SWP and written into specifications. Subsequently, a range of arrangements was commissioned allowing varying degrees of control over budgets with only the pilot that worked solely with care leavers having full control of the placement budget.

It was suggested that accounting systems in local authorities were generally not fine-tuned enough to enable commissioners of an SWP to be *'genuine about the full cost of delivering those services'*. Only two local authorities used unit costs for commissioning SWPs. Some bids had been rejected on the basis of being too costly, and local authorities had entered into negotiations with preferred bidders around their costs. Pilot site staff were aware from discussions at shared learning events that application of the financial model varied between areas, with some appearing more generous to potential providers than others.

The original working party report (Le Grand 2007) had envisaged that SWP staff would be available to LAC on a round-the clock basis and this aspect of the contract and renumeration proved a difficult negotiating point in some sites. Several organisations or partnerships who initially expressed interest in bidding subsequently withdrew because– *'they weren't convinced that the money on offer for the operational budget was enough to provide the service'* (Project Manager). A project manager from another site underlined the financial challenges of commissioning the SWP:

> *'Part of the problem is we're asking for a Rolls Royce service and currently the authority has a Skoda service…one of the reasons we had so few people tender was because when they looked at the maths they realised they couldn't do what the DCSF and we were asking for on the budget that we were going to transfer over.'*
>
> (Project Manager)

Generally, commissioning SWPs was a complex and demanding process for all concerned. One local authority commissioner argued that contracts of more than three years were needed for a new service to establish and produce quality work. S/he suggested that given the amount of work the tendering entailed, a three year contract was too short:

> *'It feels like you're constantly tendering these social practices all the time…that would be like a massive bureaucratic thing.'*
>
> (Local Authority Commissioner)

1.1.2 Developing Bids

DCSF funded consultancy support was also provided to support bidders, which entailed coaching them in writing bids and business plans, and this was much appreciated by in-house staff groups who acknowledged that they lacked experience of this aspect of the process. Some groups of social work staff who came together as a group specifically to develop a pilot were reported to have found preparing a bid on top of existing responsibilities too onerous:

> *'They were just finding the process difficult in terms of the amount of work and when they actually got the ITT and saw what they had do to produce in terms of getting everything ready, they baulked at that…'*
>
> (Project Manager)

This point was supported by consultants working with providers to develop bids, who remarked that groups of social *workers 'couldn't do all the things we needed them to do in terms of small business start-up and putting in proposals within the timeframe.'* One SWP manager remarked*: 'I'm a Social Worker, I don't write tenders'.* In one local authority, a partnership led by a social work team manager dissolved when that manager was off sick and the rest of the team did not progress the bid in this person's absence.

These difficulties may go some way to explaining why take-up of SWP pilot status was slower than anticipated. It appeared that existing organisations, such as voluntary sector organisations with the infrastructure to support engagement in tendering processes, fared better with such processes. In the event, only one independent SWP was developed by a team of social workers moving out of the local authority. This team was provided with a large amount of support both from consultants and from the local authority project officer. The other SWP adopting the professional practice model was constituted as a private business by an organisation that already ran a private training business, although this pilot also found the demands of bidding and set-up to be very considerable.

1.1.3 Payment by Results

A further challenge concerned payment by results (PBR) and this issue was not addressed in all the contracts. The accounts of those working closely with the pilots at start-up suggested that this aspect was delayed or suspended in a number of sites because negotiations between local authorities and providers had stalled on this issue. It was reported that some providers were unwilling to commit to PBR before they had some experience of delivering the service and this was reflected in the contracts. A suggestion from the consultants to delay implementing the requirement to insist on PBR so that contracts could be finalised was well received. The DCSF's funding guide described expectations regarding the proportion of funding to be devoted to outcomes payments in the early years of SWP operation as 'relatively small'.

The working party report (Le Grand 2007) envisaged a number of different possible approaches to the distribution of surpluses. The issue was explicitly addressed in just two of the SWP contracts where it was specified that savings or surplus in the pilot's budget, could be used as an outcome payment to improve the service or 'directly reward staff employed by the SWP'.

Some of the discussion around SWPs has commented on PBR (Cardy 2010) and analysis of the contracts showed that one early interpretation concerned reward systems for achieving savings to the placement budget rather than anticipated opportunities for better outcomes for LAC. In fact, interviews with commissioners in 2011 revealed that only three of the five local authorities were using the DCSF's outcomes framework to monitor pilots' performance or contracts.

1.1.4 Selecting a Successful SWP Bid

Bids for SWP provider status were submitted by existing voluntary sector organisations, one of which was already providing a care leavers' service for the targeted group of children and young people in that local authority; another was from a cooperative, non-profit making organisation

working currently in a different area of social care. In a local authority that had stimulated interest in the SWP amongst social work practitioners, the successful bid came from a partnership of social workers formed specifically to deliver the SWP.

Various selection procedures were put in place to decide on the organisation or partnership to provide the SWP. In all but one case, local authorities adopted or adapted existing procurement procedures used generally within the local authority for commissioning goods and services, working closely with local authority procurement staff in drafting and issuing the tender and procedures for receiving and assessing bids. As one project manager commented, commissioning the SWP *'needed to be done through democratic processes'.* These processes mainly involved issuing a tender specification and engaging in an evaluation procedure that included devising a scoring or criteria checklist to shortlist applicants. However, in one site there was no tendering process as the local authority took the decision to appoint an in-house team that would assume independent SWP provider status. In some local authorities, selection was carried out entirely as a paper exercise, scoring submitted tenders against agreed criteria, but, in retrospect, a reliance on paper or electronic-based systems to select providers was thought to impose limitations. Elsewhere, this process was supplemented by interviewing shortlisted organisations or partnerships, and even holding individual interviews with proposed senior partners.

In some local authorities, interview panels involved Project Board members and a few local authorities involved young people in the selection stage. In one local authority, where there was only one shortlisted bid, key personnel were required to make a presentation to local authority managers and young people, and to discuss elements of their written bid in detail:

> *'They then went from [the interview panel] to do a presentation to young people and an interview with a group of young people to which they very interestingly sent four different people, not the four people who came to do a presentation for us..'*
>
> (Project Manager)

Commonly, bids were scored against three main domains: service delivery; financial information and appropriateness of policies and organisational procedures, e.g. insurances, equal opportunities and other policies. Given that this was an SWP, an important criterion for one local authority was that *'it had to be majority owned by social workers'.* At least two of those interviewed indicated that they had been keen to ensure bids were not management heavy or hierarchical in structure. Shortlisted bids in these local authorities were described as 'practitioner-led' rather than hierarchical and relying on management experience. Selection teams typically involved the SWP project manager, senior commissioning staff, senior Children's Services staff, as well as senior finance staff. One local authority carried out site visits to shortlisted providers that were established voluntary sector organisations. These visits involved speaking to young people they were working with.

Although most local authorities had more than one bid to assess, a number of additional bids were of poor quality. Submitted bids were disqualified without being assessed if they had not complied with stated requirements. For example, one local authority selection team disqualified a bid without opening it for using a return address envelope that identified the applicant. It also rejected two others without assessment because applicants had not completed application forms fully or had omitted important supporting documentation such as financial statements. Other bids made it to evaluation but were rejected on quality grounds: *'had not really understood the concept or were poorly written/constructed'.*

According to one local authority manager, the one '*good*' application received by his/her local authority was considered '*too expensive*' as it was felt it had over-estimated costs. The local authority renegotiated costs with the potential provider and, for the first time in its procurement process, made a 'best and final offer'.

In the case of SWP C's contract, the local authority and the provider were already in the process of renewing an existing a contract to deliver the leaving care service. The SWP element was later incorporated by adding a sentence to the existing contract:

> *'this contract had been negotiated before the social work practice and so the social work practice came in just as the contract was being signed, so all the negotiations hadn't been around social work practice model.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Commissioners and project managers were keen to emphasise that cost considerations of price were secondary to the aim of delivering a quality service. Given that the target group was *'vulnerable children',* they *'could not let money be the deciding factor.'*

Interviews held with local authority commissioners in 2011 made it clear that SWPs were not judged to have been financially advantageous. In three of the pilot local authorities, commissioners considered that the SWPs had been more expensive than in-house services; one commissioner described the pilot as 'an expensive experiment'. In two local authorities, the pilots were seen as financially neutral with the exception of the DCSF start-up funding.

1.2 SWP Start-Up

1.2.1 Staff Transfer and Recruitment

Staffing the SWP pilots raised few issues where SWP staff moved directly across from local authorities or where staff were already part of the existing care leavers service that took on SWP pilot status. For example, the majority of the SWP F's staff had worked together previously in a local authority team; staff moving to the pilot were given a three year work break from their local authority posts. Additional staff were recruited later to the SWP team and were selected for their 'fit' with the established team. Union representatives emphasised the benefits of transferring existing Children's Services staff into pilots since this would ensure the employment rights of staff employed by the SWP.

A requirement for staff to participate in an out-of-hours service was identified as a key reason for difficulties in recruitment in some sites:

> *'The out-of-hours is something that I did consider when I first applied for the job, it did actually put me off applying and I think speaking to a number of people who didn't apply, that was the reason because they didn't want to be on call...if they'd advertise now without the out-of-hours I think they'd have a very different response, a lot more experienced Social Workers would probably apply.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

In one site, a staff member chose not to join the SWP because they were unwilling to participate in an out-of-hours service. Two of the pilots ended up recruiting staff in stages, in part because of difficulties experienced in recruitment. One SWP (that offered lower levels of pay than the

local authority) subsequently found that the staff group included a large number of recently qualified practitioners that made high demands on the manager. The team was described as '*needing quite a lot of support because for some it's a quite new area of work'*.

The manager appointed to lead this pilot (SWP D) was an experienced practitioner with good local knowledge but was only available on a half-time basis. A deputy was appointed to support her and the pilot staff made the joint decision that they needed a full-time manager with the result that in April 2011 the original manager was replaced by the deputy who filled the post on a full-time basis.

SWP B took a different approach, appointing experienced 'tried and tested' staff. Staff were originally employed on a 0.8 contract but this was later increased to full-time and additional staff were recruited in response to the travel demands generated by a cohort of looked after children that was largely placed out-of-area.

Three of the pilots acknowledged the high level of mental health needs among LAC and the need for therapeutic expertise in the team by aiming to appoint mental health or counselling specialists as permanent team members. In two cases, attempts to establish these posts were thwarted by lack of funding or staff resignations and the pilots resorted to purchasing independent counselling or mental health services. However, SWP C appointed a specialist mental health worker as part of the team.

1.2.2 Size, Complexity and Location of Cohort

Four of the five pilots had agreements that fixed the numbers of children and young people they worked with and the sizes and nature of SWP cohorts of children and young people were shown in Table 1 in the previous chapter. However, although in SWP C there was an agreement concerning the number of care leavers the pilot would include, the pilot was required to take on additional numbers as figures for this group rose within the local authority. Additional funding for this increase did not translate into extra frontline staff and concern was expressed about the impact of rising numbers on the quality of service:

> *'…the sheer numbers and the budget restraints. So I think our biggest challenge is maintaining a good service.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

In contrast, when SWP F was asked to take on additional numbers to accommodate rising numbers of looked after children across the authority, the local authority provided sufficient extra funding to allow the pilot to employ another social worker.

Appendix 4 shows that analysis of SSDA903 data identified distinct differences between the pilots' cohorts of children and young people and those looked after by the relevant host local authorities. SWP children tended to be older and to have spent longer periods in the looked after system. Such differences reflected the criteria used to inform selection of SWP children and young people. Commissioners interviewed commented on the level of needs in the cohort of children and young people entering the SWPs. While children and young people in SWP F were considered representative of looked after children across the authority, the cohorts selected for other pilots, such as SWP A and SWP B, were chosen on the grounds that they had high levels of need. Staff in three of the five SWPs (SWP B, SWP C and SWP D) commented on the complex needs of high numbers of children in their cohorts. In SWP C it was thought that the large proportion of difficult cases was representative of the looked after population in

general. In contrast, staff in SWP B perceived their cohort to be a high need group within the looked after population; this had been an explicit aspect of this SWP's remit:

> *'I've worked in local authority, I've never had this complexity of cases'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

However, SWP B's staff carried smaller caseloads than would have been available to local authority staff, and this was seen to offer opportunities for more focused work with this group:

> *'Staff have got a much smaller case load and they've been able to do much more direct work than they would have ever been [within the LA], it's a much more manageable caseload so I think that is definitely an advantage.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

In SWP D, the complexity of cases was particularly challenging because a significant proportion of the social work team were newly qualified and needed additional support. This led to staff and managers working many more hours than were contracted. Furthermore, as cases were transferred over to the SWP and staff were recruited in waves, complex cases had to be allocated to social workers who were in post at the time of transfer, regardless of their level of experience:

> *'Often we weren't fully aware what was in some of the cases and how complicated they were but because as people arrived and cases were arriving gradually we were obviously giving people cases that maybe some of the times wasn't quite matching up to their experience, might not have been what we would have given if you had a team to allocate to and you had more information how difficult or complex it is.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Staff in three of the four SWPs reported that a large proportion of their cohort was placed out of the area. In SWP F, staff were accustomed to working with these placements; bringing those children back to the local area was one of the explicit aims of the SWP. However, in two of the SWPs (B and D), the large numbers of children placed out of the area were described as a demand on the operational budget which had not been originally accounted for and meant that a considerable amount of staff time was devoted to travelling, thus reducing staff availability and flexibility. The analysis of data from local authority 903 returns included in Appendix 4 shows that, with the exception of SWP A, the SWPs were more likely that their local authority counterparts to be working with children placed outside their local authorities and that SWP B worked with a particularly high proportion of children placed over 30 miles from home when compared to the proportion cared for by the host local authority.

1.2.3 Transferring the Cohort

The degree of continuity experienced by children and young people in the transfer to SWPs varied. In SWPs A and F, the majority of the cohort was already known to staff: the children and young people transferred alongside their local authority social workers who moved into the SWPs. In SWP C, the initial cohort was already with the service that had been caring for the authority's care leavers prior to taking on SWP status. In this site, additional young people were automatically transferred into the SWP at age 16 or after the year 11 exams following their 16th birthday, and there was an established system of planned meetings and information transfer to

facilitate this process. Transition of the cohort into the SWP appeared to have been least problematic where continuity was maintained for both children and practitioners:

> *'…it was quite plain sailing, it worked really well, there were no issues, we just all moved across quite nicely, they knew there was consistency, so there was no change of workers but again that was planned and introductions took place before we all moved, so it worked really well'.*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

In contrast, in SWPs B and D where the cohort was not known to them, staff faced a number of challenges. These included difficulties gaining the trust and respect of some of the parents and carers who regretted losing long term relationships with their previous local authority workers. Some parents and carers had voiced concerns that pilot staff were not 'real social workers' or they were opposed to the 'privatisation' that they felt SWPs represented.

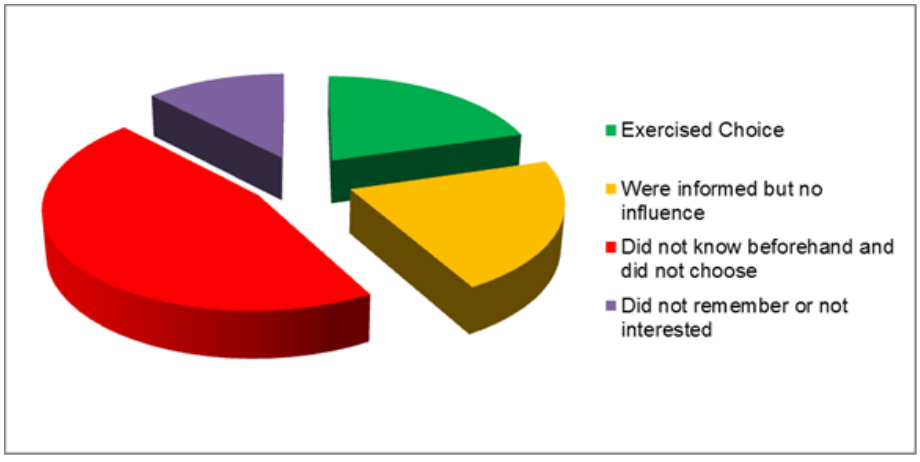
Where the children were not known to them, pilot staff found it useful to have face-to-face meetings with the previous social worker and the opportunity to refer back to the previous social worker was also welcomed:

> *'In a number of transfers I was there with the Social Worker but quite a lot I wasn't, but what was more important to me was sitting down face to face with the social worker and talking about the child and it was really positive, I got a lot out of it.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

1.2.4 Children's and Young People's Choices about Transfer

When children and young people from the five pilots were interviewed in 2010 and 2011 they were asked whether they had exercised choice about transferring to the SWP. Of the 121 children and young people who were interviewed from pilot sites, 98 gave clear responses to this question. Using data from 2010 when young people were interviewed for the first time and when responses to this question were more detailed, just over half the young people who could remember said they did not know they were going to be transferred to an SWP and did not have a choice about it. About a quarter were informed, but did not exercise any influence. Almost a quarter felt they had made a decision to join the SWP.

Figure 2.1 Children's and Young People's Degree of Choice about Joining the SWP



There were marked differences between pilot sites in both the extent to which young people felt informed and whether they had exercised choice. In SWP C and SWP A, young people had not exercised choice, because either the pilot was a continuation of the existing service or young people interviewed did not perceive the SWP to be a different model from local authority social work. In SWP C, more than half the young people felt they were informed before the change in service provision, whereas in SWP A none felt they were given advance notice.

Where children and young people did exercise choice, there was substantial variation in the proportions interviewed who had done so. In SWP F, more than half (16) said they had made a choice, whereas in SWP D, only two young people said they had had a choice and only four said they were informed. Many young people in SWP D said they had been moved to the SWP because their allocated social worker was leaving. In SWP B, there was more choice and information sharing reported than in SWP D, but less than in SWP F.

Typically, those who felt they had had no choice said 'I *was just told that's what's happening*' or '*I didn't even know I was not part of the council*'. Even in one SWP where the staff felt that young people had been given choice, two young people felt they had not exercised choice:

> *'They had no choice, we all had no choice, we had to move over.'*
>
> (18 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

Many of those who stated they had chosen to be part of the SWP described their choice as circumscribed – '*it was a bit of both*'. They might have been informed that they were to join the SWP, but asked what they felt about it. Some expressed indifference, saying '*I don't really mind*', often because they did not perceive it as any different from what they would have been offered through traditional social work or leaving care teams. Others professed little knowledge of SWPs but were prepared to '*give anything a try*'. Many could not remember whether or not they had been asked to be part of the SWP, or remembered being asked but did not mind one way or the other. Others were not bothered since changing social workers was a typical occurrence.

Children and young people had been informed about the move to a pilot by various means. In four SWPs, some children and young people had received a leaflet and/or a letter about the SWP. In many instances, children and young people were initially told about SWPs by their allocated worker. Families, foster parents and supported lodgings providers also played a role in explaining the SWP to some children and young people. Some children and young people recalled making their own informed decisions with the support of existing social workers, reviewing officers or meetings. In one SWP, becoming part of the SWP had involved a clear formal process:

> *'We went to the presentation, I had a form and it said yes or no and I clicked, ticked yes and put my name and address and that's it.'*
>
> (12 year old, looked after boy, SWP)

Commonly, where children and young people had agreed to transfer to the SWP it was to ensure continuity of worker, either of social worker or Personal Adviser (PA), especially where they had an established relationship:

'I wouldn't like to change my PA now, because I know [worker] well enough now, I've known her for a couple of years now and she's a good woman as well isn't she? She's sound.'

(17 year old boy, care leaver, SWP)

Some children and young people had younger and/or older siblings who were moving to the pilot and had asked their IRO to find out if they could also be part of it.

Interviews with 21 IROs from the five sites offered little evidence that handover reviews had been used to prepare children for transfer to the SWP; only IROs from SWP B reported being involved in the early stages of planning their local SWP. IROs did not appear to have chaired handover reviews for children and young people moving into SWP A or SWP F where most (but not all) had remained with their original social worker. In SWP C, it had been established practice previous to the establishment of the SWP for a worker to attend a review prior to the young person transferring to their service. In SWP D, handover reviews were not held but, in some cases, SWP staff attended a review before a child or young person was transferred. In SWP B, handover reviews appeared to have been planned but only one of the five IROs interviewed from this local authority reported that they had happened. One IRO reflected that a lack of preparation had created problems for children and their parents and consequently for SWP staff:

'some of the young children certainly who I've come in touch with, were not happy with it really because they got on well with their Social Worker and couldn't see why they had to change again …so some children …were very guarded and wary and, and certainly in one particular case the parent even today, you know, it's been going a year plus now, you know, still, still compares the Social Worker with the existing Social Worker….so they have that to overcome really.'

(Independent Reviewing Officer)

The feelings evoked by a lack of consultation were evident in some cases. Some pilot staff described a lack of choice in relation to transfer as contributing to resistance on the part of some children and carers and a few young people described being presented with a fait accompli:

'Well I rang up, I got told, I had to ring them and find out, I say is [worker name] there? And they was like oh he's not your Social Worker anymore, I said well who is then? And then that's when they told me.'

(19 year old boy, care leaver, SWP)

Some IROs interviewed confirmed this '*fait accompli'* approach:

'Clearly somebody's made a decision not to inform the social worker or the child or family until, not last minute but towards the end…if it's going to happen next week or the week after, it's a fait accompli*, it's happened.'*

(Independent Reviewing Officer)

In a small number of cases, children and young people expressed anger about their lack of involvement in the decision to move to an SWP:

'I think, sometimes I think the Social Services doesn't really think about the kids, I think they just think about themselves because think about it, I knew [worker name] all my, nearly all my life yeah, and then they just go and

change it, they didn't think about the kids when they changed it, they just changed it...I don't think they took two seconds to look at it, they just changed it'

(14 year old, looked after boy, SWP)

One young person described the emotional impact of being chosen to transfer to the SWP as negative:

'I felt like… am I not like special enough like or? I felt like I'd done something [wrong] like to make them swap me over'

(13 year old, looked after girl, SWP)

Comments such as these emphasise that, for children and young people, transfer to an SWP could have consequences that went beyond a change of social worker to impact on their attitude to services more widely or their self-esteem. They reinforce the importance of ensuring that young people receive adequate information prior to joining SWPs and that they are enabled to make informed choices about transfer, rather than feeling that being shifted to an SWP is yet another thing that has been done to them against their wishes.

1.2.5 Parents' Choices about Transfer

None of the 19 parents of children and young people interviewed in 2011-12 felt they had been offered a choice about transfer, although one or two described their children making a decision about it. Four parents had not been informed about their child's move to the SWP until some time after the move. This parent only discovered his children had been transferred to the SWP when he went to social services office to claim travel money for contact visits:

'And it turned out they'd shifted them from there to here without even telling me'

(Parent)

Seven parents from SWP D, SWP C and SWP F had been informed beforehand, usually at a meeting, but in some cases by letter. Feelings about the change of social worker occasioned by the move to the SWP were mixed. Some had been 'confused' or felt sad at losing the relationship they had forged with the previous social worker whom they had thought was good. One was unhappy with the shift from previously being supported through complex court proceedings by a qualified social worker to being allocated an SWP support worker. However, for several other parents, the change had proved very positive.

1.2.6 Transferring Case Files

In SWP C and SWP F where staff were already working with the majority of the SWP children and young people and where the SWPs had an established on-going relationship with the local authority, there were few issues relating to transfer of files. Where new children entered these two pilots, it was established that new cases were not accepted unless case files were up-to-date and both pilots had clear protocols regarding transfer of information:

'If it's got gaps we don't accept transfer, they know what our expectation is because we send the transfer checklist, so they know all the paper work we want, and if there's significant gaps, we'll make them go back and come again.'

(SWP Staff Member)

In contrast, where the cohort was not known, the transfer of case files was experienced as problematic. In these authorities, the need to transfer case files often highlighted quality issues and one project manager was *'actually quite shocked at the quality of stuff'*. However, attempts to update files before transferring them resulted in significant delays in sending them over and some SWP staff began work on cases with only a transfer summary and without knowing children's full background. In these situations, staff could be anxious about contact with parents who represented an unknown quantity, and some staff preferred to minimise such contact. In some cases, essential information missing from case files was difficult and time consuming to obtain:

'Well I don't have a proper handover really on most of my cases and the information I need is not on the system, [the files] are somewhere in an office that we can't get into easily and then they're thrown in a filing cabinet in no systematic way...so I'm ringing everybody and asking everybody and not getting much joy really, so I think the way they handed over the case, I would say appalling really'

(SWP Staff Member)

In one local authority, the SWP did not receive the complete files of the children they were caring for because the local authority had concerns about the security of the SWP building and decided to retain files within the civic centre. SWP staff were able to look at files and copy excerpts. In retrospect, it was felt that this SWP should have adopted the approach taken in those practices with established on-going relationships with the local authority where it was agreed that information would be transferred before cases were accepted by the SWP.

1.3. SWP Offices and Equipment

Three of the pilots selected and adapted premises with the aim of creating an environment that was welcoming and accessible for children and young people. They included facilities such as computers and pool tables that young people could drop in and use and space for contact activities such as cooking. However, in one of these offices, access was controlled in order to protect equipment and files. In another, the office location was acknowledged to limit its accessibility by staff and commissioners since it was situated some way from the town centre. Staff's, children's and parents' views on the extent to which these offices were perceived as friendly and welcoming are reported in Chapters 4 and 6.

The two pilots that served more dispersed populations of LAC and care leavers had less incentive to make their offices user friendly since only a proportion of SWP children and young people would be expected to visit the offices regularly. However one of these pilots delivered a youth club from its organisation's central office base. The other was located in the local authority's social services office.

The logistical considerations associated with the set-up of the pilots were challenging in some sites. Difficulties encountered included securing appropriate premises for the SWP in the right area and arranging IT provision. SWP B encountered particular difficulties in initial provision and installation of IT equipment which staff attributed to lack of support from the local authority. The

lack of a start-up budget required pilot staff to make initial purchases for the SWP with their own money and this was described as having impacted on later relationships with the local authority.

Chapter 1 Summary Points

- There was a substantial level of investment in the SWP model from central government in the form of start-up funding for local authorities developing the pilots and consultancy support for the tendering, bidding and contracting processes. The Evaluation Advisory Group and the evaluation itself represent additional forms of government investment.
- The commissioning process for the pilots was experienced as demanding by both local authority commissioners and SWP providers. This was in part because of the restricted time-scales, but small groups of practitioners who came together for the purposes of forming a 'professional partnership' were dissuaded and disadvantaged by their lack of experience and resources in relation to bidding, despite professional partnerships being the preferred business model of the Social Care Practices Working Group and several of the local authorities. Larger existing organisations with the relevant experience and infrastructure fared better in the tendering process and a number of groups of social workers withdrew from the bidding process. Only one team of local authority social workers was successful in setting up a professional partnership.
- There were difficulties estimating the costs of delivering an SWP service in some local authorities: only two appeared to make use of unit costs in calculating the price of the contract. There were similar problems in developing monitoring systems and incentives for SWPs. Only three local authorities made use of the lengthy outcomes framework devised by the DCSF and its consultants. In the two cases, where payment by results was built into contracts, it concerned reward systems for achieving savings on the placement budget rather than focusing on improved outcomes for LAC.
- Some of the key characteristics of the original SWP model, such as the provision of an out-of-hours service and control of the placement budget, proved contentious aspects of the commissioning process, and were dropped as a requirement of SWP status. The requirement to work out-of-hours was also reported to have deterred applicants for pilot jobs.
- The quality of the pilots' relationships with the local authority appeared central to the start-up process, as did local authorities' availability of time to support the SWP and commitment to its successful implementation. Where local authorities were preoccupied with other aspects of the service, such as safeguarding or restructuring, the commitment and energy required for SWP start-up and support were not available. A pre-existing relationship between the local authority and the SWP provider facilitated trust and confidence which could take time to establish in the absence of an established relationship.
- The pilots differed in their organisational forms but also with regard to the identified level of need in their cohorts of children and young people.
- SWP set-up was facilitated by staff transferring or already being constituted as a stable team which was known to the cohort of children and young people. Recruitment of new teams was more demanding and could result in delays. Where the cohort was not known to them, SWP staff experienced some difficulties gaining the trust and respect of

parents and carers. However, face-to-face meetings with the previous worker could ease this transition.

- Less than half the children and young people interviewed felt that they had been given a choice about joining the SWPs. Some children and young people expressed anger or confusion about their lack of involvement in this process. About a quarter were informed, but did not exercise any influence. Just under a quarter felt they had made a decision to join the SWP but this choice was sometimes constrained. There were differences between the pilots in respect of the extent to which children and young people exercised choice about their transfer. None of the parents interviewed were involved in the choice about their children's transfer to the pilots but some, although not all, had been informed about it beforehand.

- Where the cohort of children and young people was not known to social workers the transfer of case files was experienced as problematic. Delays in transferring files meant that some pilot staff began work on cases with inadequate information.

- Three of the pilots, namely those whose cohorts of children and young people were placed in the local area, worked to ensure that their offices were child friendly. This was achieved by choosing accessible premises and including facilities such as computers and pool tables and space for contact activities. Even so, some of these offices still struggled with their location and barriers to access due to security concerns.

Chapter 2 - The SWP Pilots in Operation

This chapter describes the pilot staff and reports their views on how the key elements of the SWP model were operationalised as well as identifying the support available to the pilots. We also report on the extent of children's and young people's understanding and awareness of SWPs and on their participation in the pilots, particularly with respect to governance. As SWPs promised a flatter decision making structure, it is particularly interesting to discover whether this permitted children's views to have any impact. The chapter draws on interviews undertaken with SWP staff and children and young people between start-up in 2009/10 and early 2012.

2.1 Pilot Staff

2.1.1 Key Characteristics of the SWP Workforce

The staffing structure of the SWPs varied considerably because of the different sizes and remits of the pilots (see Table 2.1). A considerable proportion of the work of SWP A and SWP F and all that of SWP C involved work with care leavers. These three SWPs had a low proportion of staff designated as social workers. In all SWPs, the practice lead and team leaders were social work qualified.

Table 2.1 Staff employed by SWPs

	SWP B		SWP C		SWP D		SWP A		SWP F	
	Summer 2010	Winter 2011	Summer 2010	Winter 2011	Summer 2010	Winter 2011	Summer 2010	Winter 2011	Summer 2010	Winter 2011
CEO/Senior Manager	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Team Leader/Assistant Team Leader		0	6	6	1	0	1	1		0
Social Worker	8	7	12	14	8	8	4	5	4	5
Social Work Assistant/Family Support Worker/Project Worker	1	1		2	2	2		0	2	1
Other professionals		0	11	9		0	1	0		0
Personal Adviser/Case Worker		0	15	13		0	8	5	4	5
Business Manager/Senior Administrator	1	1	2	1	1	1	*	0	1	1
Other Administrative staff	1	1	10	9	1	2	*	2	1	2
Apprentice		0		1		3	1	0		0
Total	**12**	**11**	**57**	**56**	**14**	**17**	**16**	**14**	**13**	**15**

The ratio of managers and operational staff to administrative staff was similar across all pilots at around 5:1 (ranging from 4:1 to 6:1).

Managers and practitioners in the SWPs were in the main full-time. However, in one pilot (SWP B) all staff, with the exception of the CEO, worked a four day week until January 2011, when four social workers moved to working a five day week.

As can be seen from Table 2.2, SWP B and SWP D had a higher proportion of social work qualified staff than SWP C, SWP A or SWP F. SWP C employed specialists from other disciplines, such as a Mental Health Worker and Connexions Workers, who were not social work qualified. The Mental Health Worker was a Registered Mental Nurse and Family Therapist. The other large group of staff without social work qualifications was Personal Advisers (PAs) who work with care leavers. There is no prescribed qualification for PAs however, given the level of knowledge and skill required, many PAs had extensive experience in working with children and young people and/or other qualifications, for example, as teachers, youth workers or foster carers. SWPs also employed staff designated as family support workers, social work assistants or project workers, terms used to describe staff without social work qualifications who work with looked after children.

Table 2.2 Social Work Qualified Staff across SWPs

Pilot	Number of SW Qualified staff out of all staff		Ratio of FTE SW qualified to operational staff	
	Summer 2010	**Winter 2011**	**Summer 2010**	**Winter 2011**
SWP A [1]	6 out of 16	6 out of 14	2.05: 5	2.2: 5
SWP B	9 out of 12	8 out of 11	4.45: 5	4.4: 5
SWP C [1, 2]	19 out of 57	21 out of 56	2.2: 5	2.2: 5
SWP D [3]	10 out of 14	9 out of 17	4.2: 5	4.2: 5
SWP F [1]	5 out of 13	5 out of 13	2.5: 5	2.5: 5

1 These pilots were working with a high proportion of care leavers and had a high level of people working with young people who were not social work qualified

2 This pilot also has one mental health worker, four Connexions workers as well as four accommodation officers. In May 2011 it had two youth workers; these positions were lost by November 2011 but two project workers were taken on.

3 In this pilot the manager held a caseload in 2010; this arrangement was discontinued in 2011.

The salary scales used by SWPs, for social work and administrative roles, differed between sites (see Table 2.3). SWP B used relatively high rates of pay for their social workers in order to attract experienced staff and partners in SWP F built an increase on their previous local authority salaries into their tender document. SWP C's rates of pay, which for case holding staff

were relatively low, were set before the advent of the pilot. Social worker rates of pay in SWP D were set at a lower level than that of equivalent local authority social workers in the area, which contributed to their difficulties in recruitment of experienced staff.

Table 2.3 Salary Scales of SWP Staff November 2011[4]

SWP pilot	CEO/ Senior Manager	Social Worker	Personal Adviser/ Caseworker	Social Work Assistant/ Project Worker	Business Manager/Senior Administrator	Other Admin Staff
SWP B	Not supplied	£38,000 – £42,000	N/A	£18,000 – £20,000	Not supplied	£16,000 – 18,000
SWP C	£32,028 – £39,565	£24,661 - £30,465	£20,590 – £25,435	£17,387 – £21,478	£17,387 – £21,478	£14,641 – 18,087
SWP D	£38,900	£28,776	N/A	£21,000	£26,000	£16,000
SWP F	£38,079 – £40,665	£26,016 - £38,953	£21,519 – £31,947	£20,626 – £22,427	£25,220 – £27,573	£13,703 – 15,291

Contracts for most of the staff in the independent pilots were fixed term and ran until the end of the SWP's contract with the local authority. The exceptions were in SWP C where some staff were seconded from the local authority, NHS or Connexions. In SWPs C and D, both of which were run by voluntary organisations, some staff were (part) employed by the parent organisation so their contracts extended beyond the life of the pilot. Contracts in most sites were based on local authority staff contracts (and, where applicable, contracts in the parent company) with the exception of pension arrangements, which were less beneficial than the final salary pension schemes enjoyed by local authority staff. Staff in SWP F had negotiated a 'work break' with the right to return to the local authority with no loss of pension of other working rights if the SWP's contract was not renewed.

SWP C incorporated Payment by Results into staff's remuneration; staff in this pilot had to meet targets to secure an annual pay increment. Staff shareholders within the two professional partnerships held share options. In the social enterprise, these were nominal £1 shares and shareholders did not expect to profit from the enterprise. In SWP B, the private company, there was confusion amongst front-line staff about whether they held share options or would be entitled to a bonus. The director withdrew the offer of a share allocation to staff when it emerged that the local authority would not be offering incentives for meeting outcomes; shares were held

[4] Staff in SWP A were unwilling to supply information on their salary scales.

only by staff who were Directors. Staff in pilot D received a bonus at the end of the year when they made a surplus.

Caseload size on its own does not convey caseload weight, and the absence of responsibility for complex child protection cases in the SWPs makes it impossible to compare pilot caseloads to those of local authority teams. However, it is useful to identify the range of caseload size across SWPs and any changes over time. A higher caseload was held by social workers in SWP C which worked predominantly with care leavers: social workers in this SWP had 25 cases per full time equivalent (FTE) member of staff, whilst social workers in other pilots had caseloads per FTE ranging from 13 to18.

Table 2.4 Average Caseload of SWP Social Workers

Pilot	Average Caseload per Social Worker FTE	
	Summer 2010	**Winter 2011**
SWP B	13.5	14
SWP C[1,2]	25	25
SWP D	16.6	16-18
SWP A[3]	16	14.9
SWP F[2,3]	15	13[4]

1 This SWP worked with care leavers and the caseload applied equally to certain non-social work staff as well as social workers

2 Managers or deputy managers in these areas also carried a, sometimes smaller, caseload (this was the case in SWP D when these data were collected in 2010 but the arrangement changed in 2011)

3 This SWP worked with care leavers but Personal Advisers had higher case loads

4. For four social workers the figure was 15.75; the practice lead and one of the social workers had a caseload of 7 or 8.

The SWP model was designed to resolve the problem of high turnover amongst social workers by promoting professional autonomy and cutting bureaucracy, and thereby boosting staff morale. Its architects predicted that the preferred model of an employee-owned practice, where staff had a stake in the organisation, would further promote stability amongst staff. Data supplied by SWPs (see Table 2.5) showed that staff turnover was low in three sites (A, D, and F), which included the in-house SWP and the social enterprise professional partnership. In the second year, there were no leavers in two of these SWPs and in the third site there were no leavers amongst managers or front line staff. In another larger pilot (SWP C), six (11%) staff left

during the second year, including two case-holding staff who were replaced. Two teams in this SWP merged and lost two administrators in the process, one permanently. Two full-time youth worker posts were lost since the SWP started but there were plans to recruit two part-time project workers funded by the youth service. This pilot employed a higher proportion of staff without social work qualifications whose salaries were at the lower end of the range (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3). In SWP B, where the majority of staff had a social work qualification, turnover was high: in the course of the pilot's second year three social workers left out of seven case holding staff, and the business manager, who was one of the three company directors, left after a long period of absence.

Table 2.5 – SWP Staff turnover

SWP	Total staff numbers – summer 2010	Total staff leavers - start-up to Nov 2010	Total case holding staff leavers – start-up to Nov 2010		Total staff numbers – Nov 2011	Total staff leavers – Dec 2010 to Nov 2011	Total case holding staff leavers – Dec 2010 to Nov 2011
SWP A	16*	0	0		14	DK	0
SWP B	12	1	1		11	6**	3
SWP C	57	7	3		56***	6	2
SWP D	14	1	0		17	0	0
SWP F	13	1	0		15	0	0

*Does not included administrative staff, as numbers were unavailable at that time
**Includes two apprentices, who left prematurely
*** Includes one agency social worker

2.1.2 Staff Views on SWP Ethos

Autonomy and decision making

The SWP ethos, as envisaged by its architects, included several components, including autonomy, involving staff in decision making, being made up of small multi-disciplinary teams, and providing a flexible and personal service. Interviews with SWP staff in 2010 and 2011 identified how these principles were translated into practice and any associated benefits and disadvantages.

Degree of autonomy from the local authority

The self-governing SWP was planned in such a way to attempt to avoid social work staff feeling de-motivated, overwhelmed by bureaucracy and deprived of autonomy; and to replace rule-based managerial accountability with knowledge-based professional accountability, where there would be freedom to make efficiency savings and to innovate, as outlined in the *Consistent Care Matters* report (Le Grand 2007).

We begin by exploring how staff in the SWP pilots understood the relationship between the SWP and the host local authority. We first consider the four independent pilots (SWPs B, C, D and F), then look at the fifth site (A), which was an in-house team with some delegated responsibilities and a degree of operational freedom.

The four independent SWPs were keen to foster a close relationship based on partnership with the local authority. A good relationship with the local authority was deemed critical to the functioning of the four independent pilots at the outset and as they became more established, in order to facilitate such matters as effective negotiations concerning placement decisions; effective partnership with Children's Services practitioners and fair performance monitoring. Staff perceived trust to be high in two sites (F and C) and to grow in a third as staff became more confident and less reliant on support from the host authority (D):

> *'If you were to analyse all the Social Work Practices that are working very well it's because they have a good relationship with the local authority.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

In the other independent SWP (SWP B), staff described how what they perceived to be a poor relationship and lack of trust had hindered the early start-up process considerably. In the second year of operation, trust remained low, despite intervention from the DfE consultants, and staff remained pessimistic about developing an improved working relationship with the local authority. In this pilot, staff considered that the local authority had not relinquished control over the cohort and had restricted the SWP's control over decisions made about children, such as over respite care arrangements. Staff felt that the pilot had been set up in a way that had led to an 'us and them' situation between the SWP and local authority managers and practitioners that was irretrievable, and that a lack of clarity in the original contract caused on-going difficulties:

> *'…constant moving of the goal posts… we're like their forgotten child pushed over into the corner somewhere…some of the bridges that have been burnt can never be rebuilt…'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Staff in pilots with established histories of working with the relevant local authorities felt it could be a long-term process for an SWP to establish credibility and for the local authority to trust the SWP enough to relinquish control:

> *'…Our managers work very hard to establish credibility with the local authority over the years, [achieved] partly because that's been so many years that they've worked with them.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

As *Consistent Care Matters* (Le Grand 2007) envisaged that each practice would hold a budget, via a contract with the local authority, and use it for individual social workers to fund the placement, support and activities they believed each individual child on their caseload required. In practice, the degree to which local authorities devolved control over budgets and placements to SWPs varied.

The degree of responsibility over the placement budget ranged from the SWP which managed the whole of the care leavers service for that local authority (SWP C) being responsible for the whole placement budget, to one SWP (SWP B) that had no control over the placement budget

or information on placement budget costs. Where placement budgets were held by the local authority, there were no plans to devolve them further; small SWP teams or their parent organisations (Local Authority D, Local Authority F) were reluctant for them to take on the financial responsibility of potential high cost placements for which it was hard to plan. All local authorities devolved operational budgets for support and activities for children and young people to the SWP or to the parent voluntary organisation that operated the SWP.

An SWP could be granted limited autonomy, for example, having to refer to the local authority concerning placement decisions or spending on parental contact visits or could be given free rein as long as statutory requirements were met. There was also variation in the degree to which pilots sought autonomy in different areas: SWPs, to varying degrees, relied on local authorities for a range of services and support, including supervision of a manager in one site, training, IT, rental of local authority premises and equipment, legal services, out-of-hours cover and access to psychological services for children contracted by the local authority. Local authorities charged for some of these services, such as premises and equipment, whereas other services were provided free of charge, e.g. training. In all pilots, the local authority was providing expertise required for court work and addressing safeguarding issues. Using local authority legal services was deemed more efficient than commissioning independent services:

> *'…we follow [the local authority's] policy on safeguarding, I mean legal matters we've had a few judicial reviews and we've used [the local authority's] solicitors and barristers…I'm sure we could commission but they're in-house and understand, so it would be silly really…they were very useful…'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Although SWP staff were not making decisions about admitting children to the looked after system, they needed to respond to any safeguarding issues that arose in respect of children and young people for whom they provided services. Pilots were seen to benefit from advice and expertise provided by local authority Children's Services managers in respect of complex high risk cases:

> *'I think the weakness of [our SWP] is probably managers at a higher level don't have the hands on child protection experience in this organisation that you might get in another organisation that is more dedicated to Children's Services...I think that's why it's really important for us to have good links with local authority managers.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Advantages and challenges associated with autonomy

Staff considered that autonomy allowed: more streamlined decision making than was possible within a bureaucratic local authority, which left more time available for face-to-face work with children and young people, families and carers; freedom to work creatively and flexibly and thus provide a more responsive, cost-effective and tailor-made service; and opportunities within a flatter management structure for front-line staff and young people to influence decision making. These themes are discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

A number of challenges were associated with autonomy. One concerned isolation from other social work teams or local authority placement providers, who might well be co-located with local authority social work teams (SWPs D and F); this issue was also identified as problematic

by professionals from other agencies who commented on the pilots (see Chapter 3). In the current climate of job insecurity and tight local authority budgets, a rift could develop between SWP and local authority staff or placement providers, both sides feeling threatened by the other (SWP D). Staff in one SWP (SWP F), which paid higher wages than equivalent local authority staff, experienced friction between themselves and local authority staff in respect of this. Staff also suggested that when statutory procedures such as safeguarding needed to be followed SWP staff could find themselves duplicating work done by local authority staff because communication was less easy between staff in two separate organisations than staff co-located within one organisation.

Staff described how it could take time to build links with local authority partners such as education services and CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), and also with independent organisations, such as fostering agencies. Groundwork could be hindered by the agencies having poor relations with the local authority or by an SWP being unknown locally. Usually relationships improved over time but this was not always the case, and some poor relationships deteriorated. Some staff felt they lacked authority in dealing with official bodies, especially benefits agencies, housing departments and the courts, which complicated negotiations when advocating for young people. Staff could feel less confident to challenge practice or other agencies without the weight of the local authority behind them (SWP D)[5].

Pilot managers found that matters such as staffing or building maintenance, which would be dealt with by other departments in a local authority, proved a drain on their time. SWPs were felt to have a limited financial cushion to meet unforeseen expenses, especially if they were professional partnerships or small owner-operated businesses. This meant control over high-cost placements, for example, was not seen as a viable option by SWP staff. Local authority commissioners concurred with this view. SWPs felt particularly vulnerable in the current financial climate:

> *'Where are we going to get resources from…with the cuts it's going to be hard to…stick to that kind of model, which is a non-profitable organisation…[and] keep afloat and keep it going.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Staff also identified the less favourable conditions of employment for the SWP workforce compared with local authority employment. Where staff were seconded to a pilot they felt more protected:

> *'I'm actually employed by the local authority and, and I would not want to be working for the SWP, which is nothing against the SWP…At this point in my career I would want to work for a local authority…I think some security and things like a pension.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

2.2 In-house SWP

SWP A defined itself as a 'detached-arm' service. The DfE had modified the original stipulation of 'full independence' in agreeing that SWP A, where the local authority was unwilling to locate the pilot outside the local authority, should operate as an in-house team. Key to DfE thinking

[5] The views of other professionals/agencies are reported in Section 3.

was that, despite the SWP not being autonomous, the in-house team would be employee-led. The team had a statement of purpose, produced quarterly business plans, had its own board and was based in separate premises where it functioned as a discrete unit.

2.2.1 Benefits and Challenges of being In-house

The degree of freedom that SWP A enjoyed in its anomalous position as a 'detached' but in-house team enabled this pilot to employ an extra worker using money accrued through effective use of placements, which allowed the staff to cut their caseloads. In their view, these reduced caseloads enabled them to practice more effectively and more economically than would have been possible as a fully integrated LAC team. By remaining part of the local authority, SWP staff felt they were able to maintain closer and more positive relationships with other Children's Services staff than would have been possible if the SWP had become autonomous.

However, SWP staff expressed a feeling of compromise concerning their status and would have welcomed more independence. One challenge of the in-house model they identified concerned establishing their separate identity:

> *'It's constantly trying to justify your existence…I think it, that's been more tortuous as being an in-house model and not going independent because they still say, well you're still part of the Council really, and that's taken us longer to establish and stamp our feet a bit on things.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Staff felt limited in the degree to which they could innovate or let young people shape their work while they were a part of the local authority, in part due to current local authority austerity measures:

> *'…there's so many ideas that are coming from the young people to us and then we've got ideas as well that we're passing on to management that are some really good ideas, thinking outside the box, but we're not able to do that because we're still under the umbrella of [the local authority] which limits us really and is frustrating as well...we're restricted at the moment on the spending.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

2.3 Staff Involvement in Decision Making

This section examines staff perceptions of decision making within the pilots, first by looking at decision making structures then exploring staff involvement in professional and financial decision making.

SWPs pilots had one or two layers of management. Each had a practice lead, whose role, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, ranged from that of a director/manager with no caseload to that of a lead liaison person with a half-sized caseload. The practice lead's degree of control over the decision making process varied between SWPs. For instance, in one SWP, the practice lead had the casting decision about strategy at a partnership board dominated by front-line staff; in another the practice lead took or ratified all important decisions.

Teams allocated cases in some SWPs (SWP A, the in-house team, and SWP F), and managers allocated cases in other SWPs (SWPs B and C). Generally, staff felt they were encouraged to

work creatively and make their own decisions in relation to their cases, for example, concerning placement changes, although the extent of this varied between pilots.

In the early stages of implementation, independent SWPs developed a range of structures to involve front-line staff in decision making, including:

- A strategic partnership board, made up of the majority of SWP team who were founding partners
- Staff representatives on developmental working parties, e.g. about developing supported accommodation provision for care leavers
- Social workers leading on particular areas of work, e.g. education or health, including representing the SWP at local authority committee level.

Staff and managers expected that, as SWPs became more established and teething troubles were resolved, staff would become more involved in decision making and develop a greater sense of collective responsibility whilst maintaining efficiency. The degree to which staff felt that their expectations had been met varied between sites. Staff in most sites were largely positive in their views, but staff from one site (SWP C) felt that expectations had been compromised by increased external pressures that had impacted on the workload and the SWP's financial position.

One pilot took over a year to resolve the tension between devolving accountability to less experienced social work staff, and protecting staff and making safe decisions. In response to requests from the staff team, the SWP replaced its part-time practice manager with a full-time practice manager (the previous deputy manager) and promoted a team member to lead practitioner status. The new manager in this site described how she discussed strategic decisions within the team before managing changes and that the team often drove change. Staff felt safer with the new clearer structure of accountability where one person was available full-time to take key decisions:

> *'It's basically social work-led but …ultimately people need somebody to say 'right we've got to do it', make a final decision taking into account everybody's views as far as you can, but somebody has to take the service responsibilities for everyone.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Most SWPs followed local authority (and parent company, where relevant) procedures and protocols in relation to staff performance or disciplinary issues. One pilot originally took these decisions to their board but later brought in an outside consultant as it was felt this was an area that did not lend itself to collective decision making. As this practice became more established, staff divided areas of responsibility in relation to business and premises matters, rather than dealing with them collectively.

2.3.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Flatter Management Structure and Staff Involvement in Decision Making

SWP staff agreed that decisions could be taken more quickly where there was a flatter management structure. Rules and procedures could be designed to fit the nature of the work and the size of the team; this contrasted with the local authority's generic structures which could be cumbersome. Staff felt that faster decision making allowed more time for face-to-face work,

made the service more responsive to children's and young people's needs and supported relationships between staff and clients.

Staff felt that decisions were more informed when a multi-skilled team, including front-line staff and administrative workers, contributed to decision making:

> *'The Board…really is a democratic way of running a service rather than a lot of the responsibility being put at the feet of one person in particular. We do have a practice lead…however, there are other people on the Board in a lesser position but with more knowledge of other issues…so collectively, because we are quite a multi-skilled team, we all bring something different to the table.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Involving front-line staff in decision making was seen to encourage development of collective knowledge and teamwork, and promote creativity:

> *'We do have very lively discussions within the practice...we do have some very heated discussions but it's a very honest and very positive kind of environment...we don't get shouted down by managers or told that's a stupid idea...so I feel I'm in a position where I can think out of the box'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Collective responsibility was felt to potentially spread stress, improve staff morale and lead to front-line staff feeling valued:

> *'…as time has gone on we've all got used to the ownership and the responsibility… Initially it seemed massive and quite daunting, but … we are all a lot more comfortable with it now in making decisions and representing the SWP at management committees within the Local Authority...'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

However, there were challenges associated with a flatter management structure. Staff within a pilot with relatively inexperienced social work staff identified that a small management team could leave less experienced front-line staff without management back-up when faced with difficult decisions. Local authority commissioners noted that this could create demands for Children's Services managers who had received *'lots and lots of phone calls'* or were *'pounced on'* for advice when they visited the pilot.

The view was also expressed in some SWPs that involvement in performance and budgetary decisions could distract staff from direct work with children and families:

> *'…some of it obviously is a bit dull...you just think all these things are things that are going to take you away from doing the day to day social work, that already seems like there's not enough time to do'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Commissioners were also concerned that pilot staff were spending excessive amounts of time in meetings. Even where staff were strongly committed to democratic structures, it was felt that some decisions, such as those concerning staffing, were best not taken collectively. Where

there was a large decision making body, tensions could arise from a clash of personalities. Staff who were not decision makers in a partly democratic structure could feel excluded.

2.3.2 Financial Decision Making

In practice, the extent to which practice leads within the SWP devolved financial decisions to individual social workers and other staff varied widely between sites, and by 2011 budget restrictions resulted in two sites reverting back to a situation where management authorised all spending. Staff differed in the importance they attributed to controlling financial decisions; staff in the team with most control over budget parameters, with the exception of the placement budget for looked after children (SWP F), felt the difference control made was *'massive'*, whereas staff from another team felt it made no difference to feelings of job satisfaction or ownership (SWP C).

In the one site which held the placement budget for all young people, responsibility for the budget was held by managers not staff (SWP C). There were no plans to devolve responsibility for high cost placements to staff and staff were resistant to being burdened by the responsibility of managing potential deficits in the current economic climate.

Decision making concerning budgets for supporting children and young people operated in various ways:

- Larger decisions taken by partnership board, smaller ones by any two of ten directors (SWP F).
- Individual social workers refer decisions on issues such as expenditure on holidays to a panel of three practitioners within the SWP (SWP D)
- Individual social workers requesting ratification from the project lead, although the potential for flexibility in relation to spending was described as broad (SWP B).
- Originally budgets for circumscribed items were devolved to individual social workers but this system was suspended in April 2011 and reverted to a central fund controlled by team managers (SWP C).
- SWP staff were able originally to take decisions about spending on children and young below £50 but this system was suspended in October 2011 because local authority resources were tight, from which point management authorised all spending (SWP A).

Front-line staff decided the size of the budgets for supporting children and young people in only one pilot (SWP F), although there was discussion about budgetary issues in team meetings in other SWPs. Some staff, who had no control of the budgetary limits within which they could operate discretion, felt that the limits they worked to were set too far from the front line, and that annual budget allocation should involve the SWP team:

> *'We're allowed £14 per child, per year for activities…on one hand, the practice is encouraging social workers to…develop a relationship with the child, see the child outside the placement alone but…the person setting that budget didn't really have much insight into what the cost would be to take a child out.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

2.4 Advantages and Challenges of Devolving Budget Responsibilities to Front-line Staff

As with decision making in general, staff felt it was more efficient to devolve budget responsibilities to staff: decisions could be made more quickly and followed through, in ways that could make a big difference to the lives to children and young people. Practitioners felt they could make more informed decisions about how best to use limited resources if they were able to use their discretion to channel funds to the most needy:

> *'It's often the small things that make a big difference to young people's lives…with a young person…I've got a whole list of things that all the other Social Workers didn't do [over] the last four years. He needed a plaque put down in the cemetery in memory of his mum and it was only £80, because it helps move a young person on quickly.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Devolving responsibility meant staff had an understanding of the limitations and flexibility available from under or overspending, and more clarity over spending on individual young people. Some staff felt they could develop more honest relationships with young people by accepting responsibility for financial restraints and by sharing information about these with young people, which in turn taught young people how to manage their finances.

The additional responsibility of holding budgets brought pressure that was sometimes unwelcome, and alleviating that pressure was one deciding factor in management in SWP C taking back budgetary responsibility from staff when funding became stretched:

> *'the budgets are very tight and I'm not sure of the value of that [holding budgets] for staff, I think they find that a bit of an added pressure at this moment in time…'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

There was lack of clarity noted in some sites concerning the parameters around finances:

> *'I think [staff involvement in finance] is deliberately a grey area…It's not clear to me …certainly for children [living] with families, what is available, what can we claim and how much is in the pot…There's a certain expenditure I can take from petty cash, it's not clear exactly … I think a lot of it's about how bolshie you are with the admin staff and say well I want that money now.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

2.4.1 Multi-disciplinary Teams

SWPs had instituted (or carried over) multi-disciplinary practice in different ways. In common with most Children's Services and leaving care teams, all the pilots employed a variety of differently qualified staff, including child and family support workers, caseworkers working with non-eligible care leavers, and project workers with a developmental role, Connexions workers, and youth workers, as well as qualified social workers, and one SWP employed mental health workers. As noted in Chapter 1, some SWPs had to abandon plans to employ specialist staff, or lost specialist staff during the life of the pilot, because of resource issues, or because of cuts

within a partner service, for example Connexions. Staff in SWP B felt that a multi-disciplinary approach was hampered where large numbers of children and young people were out-of-borough.

Staff described how operating in a multi-disciplinary team brought experts in different fields together to provide a more holistic service for young people. Young people and families could develop a rapport with more than one individual, which offered continuity and choice:

> *'If you're a multi-professional team then you get a better, well-rounded service for young people…[with] continuity of service so they develop a rapport with the team as much as they do with an individual, and sometimes they connect, develop a good relationship with [a support] worker, so they have a range of people that they can select if you like, rather than just one.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

A more fluid and collaborative approach could alleviate stress amongst social workers and lead to all staff feeling of equal value.

2.4.2 Small Teams

The SWP Working Group (Le Grand 2007) recommended that an SWP should consist of about 6-10 social work staff or other professional staff, plus administrative and other support. Four of the five SWPs consisted of teams of 10 to 14 professional staff (see Table 2.1). The other SWP consisted of four such teams; these were described as largely separate from each other which meant that there was not always a consistent ethos across teams. However, subsequent to becoming an SWP, the whole staff group in the large SWP had met slightly more frequently, and staff representatives from teams participated in joint working groups.

Staff held the view that a small team encouraged communication and fostered an intimate culture, as anticipated by proponents of the SWP model. Staff described how they knew each member of the team personally, became familiar with each other's cases, and were mutually supportive:

> *'Working in a small team… in a small office and we do work very closely together…we do get to know each other's cases…after a visit…we'll have a little discussion, offloading somewhat…we're very, very supportive of each other, we will offer advice and support… sharing caseloads, going out on joint visits if a colleague is weary or not confident…we're all very excited about being in this pilot and…in the smaller group you can feel the energy and enthusiasm.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

In Chapters 4 and 5, we report children's and parents' views on the advantages of a small team where all staff were familiar with children and families. Staff felt it was easier to provide a more personal service in smaller practices (the merits of offering a personalised service are explored in the next section). Staff in SWP B felt it was advantageous for the practice to be small enough for the project lead to be able to manage all the social workers and to be familiar with all the cases. In contrast, staff from SWP F described how their aim of sharing personal knowledge of colleagues' cases was aided by group supervision.

However, staff noted that in a smaller team there were fewer people to call on, for example in a crisis, or to share their knowledge. This was especially true where there were few experienced staff on a team (SWP D). The impact of staff shortages or a large proportion of staff time being taken up by travel (working on out-of-area cases) was felt to be greater on a small team. Small teams felt financially vulnerable, for example to cash flow problems (SWP B), and it was felt that small size could be a barrier to building trust with outside agencies.

2.4.3 A Personalised, Flexible Service

Staff from some SWPs described numerous ways in which they felt they were offering a more personal and flexible service, for example by offering activities or contact at weekends, or providing an in-house, out-of-hours service. This flexibility was beneficial in building productive relationships, including with parents with whom relations had previously been poor:

> *'Two parents…we're going to [arrange] six times a year contact…and the Social Worker's said that he is prepared to give a commitment to do that on a Saturday morning…because he feels that this is going to be better quality…building up better links and so we're really looking at opening the building on a Saturday…and I think this kind of creativity is really great….'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Being based in accessible welcoming premises was considered key by those SWPs that could offer this. An open-door policy provided opportunities for staff to spend more quality time with young people as well as a place where creative activities could be developed:

> *'Relationships … have improved… with carers and some of the young people I think by the fact that we offer a more open-door policy at the SWP and that they are comfortable with that, and they do feel happy just to drop in, as and when, they don't need a reason.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

There was a sense that, in some instances, premises were chosen primarily on the basis of cost-effectiveness rather than meeting the needs of young people. Staff at the in-house practice were concerned that their offices were located away from the town centre which raised challenges for young people visiting their offices. A bus pass was introduced to enable young people to visit the premises independently. Two pilots (SWPs B and C), whose cohort of young people was geographically spread, had not focused on establishing a welcoming base and did not operate a drop-in or open-door policy, although a move by one of these SWPs (SWP C) to two new 'more cost-effective' locations provided adequate space for a number of activities including using a computer, interviews with Connexions workers, and running groups, for the minority of young people who travelled to these sites. Children's and parents' views of the SWP offices are reported in Chapters 4 and 5.

One aspect of the original SWP ethos was to provide an in-house, out-of-hours service so that at all times children, carers and families could reach someone familiar or someone who knew their circumstances. The staff team from one site (SWP F) was running a comprehensive out-of-hours service, where an SWP staff member was available on the phone throughout all hours that the SWP office was closed. Staff judged the service to be a well-used and personal one:

> *'Young people are more comfortable with that because they know if they do ring the number out of hours the likelihood [is] of them speaking somebody who they know and who knows them…From our point of view and feedback*

from residential workers, foster carers, it works really really well because it's consistent…because they [the staff] all know the cases inside and out.'

(SWP Staff Member)

Two sites (SWP D and SWP C) piloted a partial in-house out-of-hours service. SWP C staff operated their service from the local authority Emergency Duty Team (EDT) office from 5pm until midnight, at which point the EDT took over. SWP D discontinued their out-of-hours service after eight weeks as there was little uptake, there were also concerns about the demands this service represented for SWP staff. SWP C however extended the pilot service and planned to make a decision about the future of the service after March 2012, based on usage data. The fourth site (SWP B) wanted to operate an out-of-hours service but the local authority did not include this in the contract. The in-house site used the local authority EDT. Staff from SWPs that did not provide a comprehensive out-of-hours service made themselves available outside office hours on a goodwill basis by responding at their discretion when young people contacted them by texts, emails or calls to mobile phones. They referred cases they defined as more severe to the local authority's EDT.

2.4.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Offering a Personal, Flexible and Accessible Service

Staff who were providing duty or out-of hours services considered that offering these services in-house by a team that was familiar with most of an SWP's caseload could provide children, carers and families with flexible access to a personal service. Young people would feel more secure and carers more valued if they felt they could reach a known person outside office hours. This flexibility promoted a perception of the service as popular and well used.

It was noted in Chapter 1 that the requirement to work unsocial hours could deter applications for jobs in SWPs. With no additional resources, a flexible service (e.g. long opening hours) could overload the staff team and deplete the core service. If underused, out-of-hours in-house provision in a small team was considered a poor use of resources. Some perceived an out-of-hours service as creating over-dependency amongst young people or carers. One site (SWP C) was not able to offer a personalised out of-hours service: the geographical size of the practice, and its operation as four separate teams meant that staff delivering the county-wide service were unfamiliar with the circumstances and issues surrounding young people and carers outside their local team.

2.4.5 Reducing Bureaucracy and Paperwork

This has emerged as a key theme for the reform of social work more widely (Social Work Task Force 2009; Munro 2011) and the original Le Grand report noted that high levels of bureaucracy and paperwork restricted the amount of time social workers spent with children. Other pilots, such as those established by CWDC's Remodelling Social Work Project (Baginsky et al. 2011), have identified administrative support as crucial in freeing up practitioner time for direct work with children and families. The figures provided on administrative support at the beginning of this chapter show that the levels of support were in line with the 1:5 ratio of administrative staff to practitioners recommended by Le Grand (2007), although staff sickness and absences could easily undermine this capacity in a small organisation. Perceptions of the adequacy of administrative support varied between SWPs: two sites (SWPs D and F) felt that their administrative support compared favourably with that provided in a local authority, and made it a priority to increase provision during the pilot via cost savings elsewhere:

> *'Yes, we had a surplus on our first year on the placement …we kept a percentage of that and as a team we sat down and said okay, how are we going to spend this money? And …everybody wanted additional admin support, so for this financial year we've bought in an admin worker for the team and, and she is now typing a lot of my contacts, … it saves me a lot of time…'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Staff from three sites were less happy with their administrative support and suffered cuts in this area, which they felt they could ill afford. One of these sites (SWP B) suffered long periods when its administrative support was below quota or non-existent. Staff in another site (SWP C) perceived that administrative staff capacity had been unchanged with the advent of the SWP and that practitioners' administrative workload was increasing, if anything. Administrative staff in the in-house team were managed externally by the local authority's Director of Administration so staff saw them as offering a less tailored service.

Most staff reported that the amount of record keeping in relation to cases was no different from that in mainstream local authority teams, although some staff found it less onerous because they had a smaller caseload than they had experienced within mainstream services. One site (SWP F) had introduced a dictaphone system whereby administrators could type up practitioners' spoken case notes, which the team found cost-effective as it freed up more highly paid practitioner time for face-to-face work with clients.

Practitioners in a number of sites described record keeping as burdensome, especially where they had insufficient administrative help to assist with typing up case notes or the local authority had handed over incomplete cases. Many staff worked overtime at home to keep paperwork up-to-date (as do many other social workers, Baginsky et al. 2010). Some of the additional responsibilities introduced in some of the SWPs, such as strategic working groups or out-of-hours cover, also reduced the time available to work with young people.

In common with recent research (Broadhurst et al. 2009) and reviews (Social Work Task Force 2009), the Integrated Children's System (ICS) was identified as a source of problems across all SWPs. The system was described as slow; not user friendly; incompatible with social work recording systems; '*overwhelming*' in consequence of the number of panels that required completion and as producing documents that were not friendly or accessible for young people to read. Staff reported occasions when documents recorded by other social workers and agencies could not be accessed, leaving SWP social workers feeling frustrated and unable to do their job properly:

> *'The previous LAC document for a review would probably take half an hour, now we have to complete a new document and it took me three or four hours in a day...it's quadrupled my time on a document that previously I was very confident on, this new document is very long winded and doesn't make any sense whatsoever'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

> *'The Pathway plans aren't as good as they used to be... they're not as friendly for young people or as readable for young people'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Staff in two SWPs (B and D) had to keep written records while problems with ICS were sorted out, which led to a backlog, resolved only by considerably reducing time spent with children and families at a later date.

2.5 Support for the Pilots

We noted earlier in this chapter that local authorities provided a range of services and support to the pilots once operational. This included local authority advice and expertise, in addition to access to local authority services such as training, premises and equipment including IT. Chapter 1 identified the role of consultancy support in the commissioning and start-up processes. A new contract was awarded by the DfE in October 2010 to Tribal (later taken over by Capita) who worked in partnership with Mutual Ventures to provide ongoing support to the pilots. This took the form of organised shared learning events as well as support and advice given to individual SWPs by Tribal staff. This included critiquing and reviewing their work, mediating between one site and its host local authority, as well as providing ongoing advice and leadership mentoring. Staff's views of these two forms of support are discussed below. SWP managers, in particular, considered that overall, the advice and support received from consultants and DfE staff were useful. Practitioners were more mixed in their views; some were unclear of the role of the consultants or found their advice impractical, too academic or pitched at management, while others found them encouraging.

Shared learning events took place regularly and addressed issues such as: strategy and evidence based practice; measuring outcomes and improvement; health; education; and the remodelling of children's social services in the London Borough of Hackney (Cross et al. 2010). Staff found the shared learning event addressing the Hackney initiative particularly useful and, in response to the presentation at this event, a working party was established in one pilot to consider changes in working practices.

However, the general consensus was that, with the exception of this particular learning event, the shared learning events had not been successful in facilitating information sharing between SWPs. It was stressed that the SWPs were too diverse to be able to compare working practices and therefore workshop discussions were '*difficult to relate to*'. For one pilot, attendance at these events was disappointing because they had received very little information from other SWPs in return for sharing information on their own progress. Some frontline practitioners who had attended the learning events felt that they were too focused on managers' concerns, suggesting that their own participation in the management of the SWP was somewhat peripheral:

> *'A couple of presentations were very good, there was a few presentations I thought were totally a waste of time...and I didn't get a great deal for a whole day out of the office...if that comes at a time when you're busy with your caseload it doesn't bode well sitting there thinking I could be [at the SWP]. I'm sitting here listening to a lot of people talk about management and things which is totally over my head, so if I was given the opportunity to go again, I'd say no.'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Consultants supported the sites more actively in the start-up stage, focusing on translating the SWP concept into practice, and less so as sites became established. The exception was where relations between one SWP and the local authority deteriorated and consultants had considerable input in mediating between the two sides.

One SWP manager described how support from the consultants had been key to informing staff about the SWP ethos and in getting the SWP concept established when it had not been at the forefront of their work initially:

> *'I think they've enabled us to keep properly focused and I think what they did which was excellent was come out and really explain in quite a bit of detail to staff about the Social Work Practice because we hadn't been involved like the others...the information was quite sparse and they helped us launch it and they've been available for suggestions and direction, so they've been quite good'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Staff from another site found that encouragement from the consultants had helped develop their training and presentation skills. They were working in partnership with Mutual Ventures Consultancy to promote SWPs. The consultants had *'opened doors'* to the Government's Mutuals Taskforce and this contact had boosted the pilot's national profile.

In SWP D, a consultant was described as providing very helpful advice and support, particularly in relation to casework. However, there was some confusion expressed about his role:

> *'I never knew what his role was, it wasn't clearly explained to me...I didn't know what involvement he would have with the practice, I didn't know for what length of time he would be involved. [He] was just one of the many visitors that would come in and I think it's only recently that we've been using him the way we should...he's clearly very experienced, he can help us in lots of ways'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

Staff were mixed in their views of the value of the consultant's mediating role in the site where trust had broken down between the SWP and the local authority. Some staff valued their input whilst others felt it was papering over the cracks of a failed venture:

> *'I think they are trying to be mediators…everybody's brought in to make it a success really I…[It would have been more helpful to] get back to the drawing board again really and say, you know, this is what SWP was supposed to be, and this is how far removed we are from it, how can we bring it back and why aren't we following this through really?'*
>
> (SWP Staff Member)

2.6 Children's and Young People's Participation in the Pilots

All the pilots highlighted the importance of children's and young people's participation in their work and they had established a variety of mechanisms for achieving this. This section draws on interviews with our samples of children and young people in 2010 and 2011 that explored their levels of understanding of the pilots' roles and work. We also report on 11 interviews completed over the course of the study with young people involved in governance in all five SWPs.

2.6.1 Children's and Young People's Understanding of SWPs

Generally, children and young people who participated in the first set of interviews in 2010 had limited knowledge of what an SWP was and how it differed from mainstream social work services. Levels of awareness varied between pilots and levels of understanding varied considerably between young people within the same pilot. Many said they had been 'told something' but could not remember much about it:

> *'I don't really know a lot about [it], I, to be honest, I thought it was still the same thing, I don't know no difference, like, is this another borough like, or whatever, it's just another thing, in'it?'*
>
> (16 year old, looked after boy, SWP)

in SWP C, where young people had been with the area's pre-existing care leaving service and had not exercised choice in relation to moving to the pilot, questions about the SWP were met with '*what do you mean?*' or '*I can't remember*'. In SWP D, many children and young people could recollect being told, for instance, how many children and young people were being transferred over to the SWP and that it would be run by a different organisation, and that they were '*trying something new*'. Other than that, they were unclear.

Children and young people were somewhat more knowledgeable in SWP F, which was the professional partnership where staff and children moved together from the local authority to form the SWP, although this understanding also varied across the sample. Although there was some uncertainty, there was an understanding that an SWP was a small team and that '*it will be quicker*', and that staff were working together to provide a '*better level of care'* that was more '*consistent*'. This higher level of awareness in SWP F was likely to reflect the fact that staff and children had moved into the pilot together and staff would therefore have had both the incentive and the opportunities to provide explanations to children and young people.

An older care leaver (22 year old, male) in SWP F understood it to be a separate business with its own budget. A younger looked after child expanded on this point:

> *'Well that they can make decisions quickly and they've got like a budget of the money and they can do, I think they can do trips, work experience they can do, they've changed their name, they've got a forum, which is a group which is made up of children in care. . . and then they've got another . . . which is for people who are leaving care and they've got like this big building which I like.'*
>
> (13 year old, looked after boy, SWP)

In 2011, when the second round of interviewing took place, young people generally still had limited knowledge of what an SWP was or how the pilots differed from local authority social work.

Again, differences were found between SWP sites. In three pilots (B, D, and F), around half of the young people interviewed in the second round could provide some explanation of what an SWP was. Sometimes this was a clear understanding related to the principal differences between the SWP and other models of social services, such as the SWP managing their own decisions or budget and the approach being '*more individual*' or '*more hands on'*. Other comments were rather more confused and made little distinction between SWPs and other forms of social work. One young person asked: '*Is it like, is it just what social workers do?*'

In two SWPs (SWP A and SWP C), however, even the words 'Social Work Practice' remained almost completely unfamiliar in 2011. In these two pilots, only one young person out of the 36 who answered the question was able to clearly identify what an SWP was. More than three-quarters of the young people in these two pilots had not heard of the term and made comments such as *'I don't even know what that is!*' As noted in the previous chapter, these two SWPs were those where young people had exercised no choice about joining the SWP. This absence of choice at the outset may have resulted in a lack of appreciation of the pilot's discrete identity and role and compounded the lack of relevance the question had for many of those interviewed. It is a concern that some young people even in 2011 still had not received any information about, and did not recognise the name of, the SWP that was working with them. This was a particular problem in one area (SWP A), where 17 of the 20 young people responded to the name of the pilot by saying they did not know what it was. When given the full address of the project, some of them were able to say that this was where part of children's or leaving care services had relocated to. No young people from this pilot described receiving written information about the SWP and this lack of both information and choice clearly contributed to their low levels of understanding about the service.

2.6.2 Young People, Participation and Governance

The data reported here are drawn from interviews with 21 young people from all five SWPs involved in collective participation activities. Eleven of these were with young people who were identified as involved in SWP governance and the interviews focused on these activities. Ten other young people also discussed their involvement in participation activities offered by the SWPs while describing their wider experience of the pilots.

Staff in all SWPs described young people's involvement as essential in shaping their service. Every SWP had a young people's group that met regularly. Sometimes this was split into two groups according to age (SWP D and F). In some pilots, young people also continued to have on-going participation in local authority children in care councils (SWP A and C). The participation work of one pilot (SWP B) was assisted by a voluntary organisation. Some groups met fortnightly; others monthly. In one SWP (SWP F) the group which had originally been set up for older young people was no longer meeting regularly by 2012 as all those involved who were over 20 years had moved on, for example going away to university, or just struggled to find the time to remain involved in the group.

Support for Children's and Young People's Participation

SWPs adopted a range of approaches to supporting young people's involvement. The apprentice post at SWP C was a paid position; other young people received vouchers, hourly payments, travel expenses and food. One young person from SWP C recognised the incentive value of such payments:

> *'…that's a way of saying thank you and trying to get more people involved...'*
>
> (19 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Again, the availability and level of training young people received to facilitate participation in SWP governance varied according to the model adopted. For instance, the apprentice at SWP C was supported to attend training offered alongside youth workers and other professionals and was working towards a professional qualification in a business related area. Young people in SWP A had accessed courses related to presentation skills including PowerPoint and training in

communicating with other young people. However, not all young people thought training was valuable or necessary.

Motivation to Participate

Most young people were motivated to become involved because they wanted to make a difference to other young people's lives as well as their own. They felt that working together with other young people and sharing their life experiences could help others. Some saw themselves providing positive role models for younger children through participation activities:

> *'For those young people who have been in care themselves, who've also had a tough upbringing and to those people who just have a tough time in general, that I can come back and say, "look I've had that type of experience, this is what you can do to change it, this is what you can do to make it better"'*
>
> (18 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Young people observed that being involved had a number of benefits for themselves in terms of increasing self-confidence and self-esteem – young people had been introduced to public speaking – and broadening horizons by introducing them to new experiences. Children and young people also described personal development achieved through acquiring new skills such as graffiti writing or pizza making through participation activities. These activities also offered the opportunity to extend support networks through increased contact with staff and meeting young people in similar situations:

> *'Friendship really that's the big thing'*
>
> (19 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

A number of young people also felt validated by participation events:

> *'At least I get my views across and at least someone hears'*
>
> (16 year old, male care leaver, SWP).

Types of Participation

The extent of looked after children's collective participation was explored across two dimensions: 'horizontal' impact on the participating young people themselves and impact on decisions made 'upwards' in the decision making hierarchy (Thomas and Percy-Smith 2011: 9). The SWPs offered activities related to three aspects of collective participation: taking part, communicating and influencing. Young people in all the pilots described taking part in collective activities that involved having fun, socialising and learning. This included creating a graffiti wall, which was then displayed at the project and through which young people had impact on the décor of the SWP building. Activities also involved trips out and sports. These activities were largely adult-led. Young people could usually decide for themselves about whether they would take part, but in one pilot (SWP C) young people were sometimes nominated by their workers, as potentially benefiting from this group. In all SWPs, young people identified that taking part had an impact on their social skills and learning:

> *'I'm meeting lots of people, I'm making new, meeting new people and new experience…'*
>
> (17 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Young people in all the SWPs described activities through which they communicated their ideas to others. This mainly entailed giving advice and information to others about their own experience of being in care. In some instances this was sharing views between young people and in other cases it involved telling others what being in care was like. In SWP C, young people had on-going engagement in developing written literature. In SWP D and SWP F, young people were also involved in communicating how the SWP model works to outside professionals. In most cases, these activities were adult initiated and part of organised consultation processes run by the wider local authority, but young people sometimes initiated discussions of their own experiences or decided the themes of discussions. Some of this consultation process was led by young people. These types of communication were seen to develop participants' social skills but were sometimes reported as influencing others' understanding, including that of staff:

> *'I think it has helped people understand like what sort of circumstances I live in as well and like educated them…it helps social workers understand as well I think, like because obviously they haven't come across every single different walk of life have they?'*
>
> (16 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

All SWPs provided activities through which young people could attempt to influence the decision making of others, related to service delivery or development. In three SWPs (C, D and F), young people were selected by staff as suitable to be involved in recruiting new staff or foster carers. One young person explained how valuable this was:

> *'With a professional interview you can't really scope out whether or not they're doing it for the right reasons but when young people interview them they can always sort of pinpoint whether or not they are doing it for the right reasons and whether or not they're appropriate so of thing. So I do find when young people do interview people they always tend to let the most exceptional people come through.'*
>
> (20 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

In another SWP however, a young person participating in governance found the idea of being involved in staff appointments surprising:

> *'I don't think we've ever come across, you know, us picking who runs it, like the staff wise.'*
>
> (18 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

The same young person described being selected by staff and young people to co-lead an adult initiated host local authority consultation to learn the views of other looked after children. These views were then fed into the Corporate Parenting Committee. They also described being involved in child initiated informal feedback mechanisms through which young people attending the fun activities based participation group could ask for changes in service delivery, such as changing the behaviour of workers. Elsewhere, there were adult initiated formal processes by which young people's views were fed back to local authority decision makers, and the pilot

manager. In addition, there were young person led initiatives. The potential for young person led initiatives in SWP C was particularly noticeable as this pilot recruited a young apprentice, a care leaver, who took the lead on participation activities, and trained and supported some young mentors to support other young people attending their residential events.

The extent to which any strategy for influencing decision making has real 'upwards' impact is hard to determine. As previous research in local authorities (Thomas and Percy-Smith 2011) has noted, children and young people in SWPs were not put in positions where they could control decisions about service planning or delivery – one young person who attended an SWP Board felt he was there to communicate his views on the work of the pilot rather than to offer advice. However, some young people did provide examples of where they had had direct impact on service delivery by influencing the decisions of managers responsible for running or commissioning services. Elsewhere, although young people communicated their ideas in meetings, the young person interviewed about governance could not think of any impact the group had achieved.

All the young people involved in recruitment thought their views were taken seriously and that they had an impact on who had been appointed. In SWP F and SWP D, young people felt they had achieved 'upwards' impact on aspects of service delivery or office location at the start of the project, but did not report any influence on service delivery after this. In SWP A, the interviewee reflected that acting on issues that were raised as informal complaints sometimes produced successes, and at other times failed to do so:

> *'There have been occasions in the past where it has made an impact and it has changed. But again, there has been other times where, you know, other [young] people there still complain about [the same thing still happening]'*
>
> (18 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

In SWP C, young people reported achieving impact upwards through the decision making hierarchy:

> *'Not the staff…the management system will change it. And like they'll get integrated and say 'yeah this needs changing…'. The system is getting really quicker now. So like the phone calls, you don't have to sit on the phone for like ages, they'll quickly answer the phone. It's all changing like that.'*
>
> (19 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

This experience of collective participation is not however unique to SWPs. In three of the six matched control sites, which provided a comparison to the pilot sites, young people interviewed also described activities where they took part in fun or learning activities which impacted on their social skills. One of these sites employed former care leavers to provide support to current care leavers. In all three of these comparison sites, young people engaged in formal processes to communicate with workers and managers about their experiences of being in care, for instance giving a presentation to a Corporate Parenting Board meeting or participating in a survey. In two comparison sites, young people reported contributing to the recruitment of staff and considered they had achieved upwards impact, as the applicants they chose had been recruited. In one local authority, young people initiated and led activities aimed at influencing decision making and consulting other young people.

The five SWPs were successful in facilitating some collective participation in fun activities. The young people identified a range of what might be described as 'horizontal' impacts on their social skills, friendships and learning. Beyond staff and carer recruitment, the extent to which the SWPs were able to include young people in the kind of 'upwards' influence that might be described as governance was limited. In SWP D and SWP F, young interviewees said existing local authority children in care councils had supported young people to have influence over the start-up of the pilots. In SWP A and SWP C, collective participation activities run by the host local authorities continued to support SWP young people to have influence over aspects of service delivery. One interviewee suggested that SWP participation activities could be made more effective by linking into the local authority's existing children in care council. This reinforces Sinclair's (2006) point that participation needs to be an embedded process if it is to be effective.

2.7 Future of the Pilots

SWP A

Staff in this in-house team saw their status 'as permanent as any other team'. Their long-term future as an in-house team had been signalled by the fact that the local authority had dropped the term 'pilot' when describing the SWP and the team was now considered an established service. There were no plans for further moves towards independence as had been envisaged when the in-house SWP was originally proposed.

SWP B

The pilot's contract was due to end in November 2012, although the local authority wanted to stagger the closure with SWP staff leaving from September 2012. Staff had been told that the local authority would be recruiting a new team but, given the poor relations between the pilot and the local authority, it was considered unlikely that any of the SWP team would apply. The local authority was anticipating a complex handover, because of the need to recruit and induct a new local authority team before handing children and young people over to new social workers or transferring them to the leaving care team. SWP staff expressed a commitment to managing the closure well, for the sake of the children as well as for their own battered morale.

SWP C

This SWP's contract with the local authority was due to end in October 2012. A the time of writing, the voluntary organisation that ran the SWP was negotiating to extend its contract for the service in its previous guise, and not as an SWP, for a further year to October 2013. It appeared likely that the remit of the service would be widened to include young people with disabilities, but the out-of-hours service established by the SWP had been discontinued. The parent voluntary organisation was in discussion with housing providers in the area with a view to providing accommodation, such as trainer flats for 16 and 17 year olds, that was more tailored to the needs of the young people.

SWP D

The local authority commissioners decided in October 2011 not to renew the SWP's contract when it ended in April 2012. Their decision was based primarily on financial grounds as the SWP had been additional to existing services rather than a substitute for them. At a time of spending restrictions, the local authority felt the need to tighten control over its budgets. Pilot

staff hoped that the children's transition back into the local authority's care would be smooth. There were concerns, however, that the local authority building was not accessible to children and young people in the way that the SWP premises had been accessible, and the services offered were different. Staff believed that a seamless transfer would be difficult to achieve in the four to five weeks available in contrast to the eight months it had taken for children and young people to be transferred into the SWP. SWP staff intended to work at evenings and weekends to ensure the transfer went well. A number of staff were moving to the local authority, which would lessen disruption for children where they retained cases. In order to finish in a positive manner, the SWP had arranged three events: the first was a party for children and young people to say goodbye; the second was a stakeholder event to thank stakeholders and, the third, a night out for staff.

SWP F

This pilot was developing a business plan for future growth with the support of DfE consultants. Their current contract was due to expire in November 2013 and they feared that, although the local authority held the SWP in high regard, large businesses could *'swallow them up'* in a competitive retendering process. Despite a perceived government commitment to the SWP model, in the form of mutuals and social enterprises, staff were aware that small businesses such as their own might be unable to compete on price. They were therefore planning to diversify, for example, as providers of supported accommodation, in case they failed to re-secure the tender.

Chapter 2 Summary Points

- In all SWPs, the practice lead was social work qualified and most of the team leaders were similarly qualified. Those pilots working with care leavers employed fewer social work qualified staff. The ratio of managers and operational staff to administrative staff was about 5:1 across the pilots.

- Most pilots had staff caseloads ranging from 13.5 to 16.6 per full-time equivalent worker (FTE). However, in the pilot working solely with care leavers the caseload was 25 per FTE.

- Levels of SWP autonomy varied across fields and between SWPs: only one pilot had full control of the placements budget (for care leavers) and pilots relied on the local authority for such resources as training, legal services, safeguarding expertise, access to specialist services, IT, out-of-hours services; premises and equipment.

- A close relationship with the commissioning local authority was key to SWP success. A pre-existing relationship between the SWP provider and the local authority provider made a trusting relationship more likely. Trust developed over time but not when the starting point was low due to disagreements over contracts and start-up arrangements.

- Autonomy could result in isolation and in the SWP carrying less weight in relation to other agencies which affected negotiations when advocating for young people. The in-house pilot faced particular challenges in relation to establishing its own separate identity.

- Most SWPs had one or two levels of management; pilots varied in the extent to which decision making was shared with front-line staff. Staff felt that a flatter management structure produced more innovation and creativity to provide a more responsive, flexible and personalised service.

- Staff considered that reduced bureaucracy promoted speedier decision making. However, involvement in performance and budget decisions could take time away from front-line work and sometimes it was necessary to have someone who was specifically accountable.

- Small team size promoted communication within the teams; staff described familiarity with each others' cases and mutual support which contributed to a personalised service for children and families. However in a smaller team there were fewer people to call on, so the impact of staff absences (especially when many staff were inexperienced) was greater. Small teams were also considered financially vulnerable.

- Only a minority of children and young people interviewed had a clear idea of what an SWP was; awareness was higher in SWP F where staff and children had moved to the pilot together. This general lack of awareness among children and young people was still evident (particularly among young people from SWP A) when they were interviewed in 2011.

- Interviews with children and young people and with those identified as involved in governance in SWPs revealed that they were involved in a range of participation activities which both contributed to their personal development and at times offered them opportunities to contribute to the development of services. The young people concerned enjoyed these activities and felt they had an impact, occasionally influencing service delivery. Such participation was not unique to the SWPs as young people in the comparison sites reported participating in similar activities.

- Future plans for the pilots varied according to whether their contracts were continuing after 2012. Those pilots where contracts were not being renewed were focusing on arrangements for transferring children back to the local authority and, in one case, on plans for staff to transfer their employment to the local authority. The two independent SWPs that were continuing both had plans to grow and diversify their business.

Chapter 3 - Other Perspectives on SWP Operations

This chapter considers the work of the pilots from different perspectives. First, the work of the SWPs is seen through the lens of other local professionals who commented on their experiences of collaborating with the pilots. Second, the views of IROs who chaired reviews of SWP children are explored; both groups of informants were invited to compare perceptions of the pilots with their experiences of working with Children's Services social workers. Third, the views and assessments of 10 local authority commissioners interviewed late in 2011 towards the end of the evaluation are presented. Finally, we take a close-up view of practice in the pilots by presenting the findings of an analysis of 45 care plans produced in the pilots and comparison sites. These findings are described alongside the views of children and young people regarding their involvement in care planning and reviews.

3.1 Other Professionals' Perspectives

Twenty-two professionals from a range of key agencies and from Children's Services participated in telephone interviews in late 2011 and in early 2012; interviews were evenly spread across the pilots. They worked in: Youth Offending (4), CAMHS (4), Connexions (4) Children's Services management (including LSCB Chairs) (5), Virtual Head of Education (2), further education (1) and other health services (2).

3.1.1 Other Professionals' Understandings of the Pilots

Health, education and youth offending professionals worked with SWP practitioners on common cases, received referrals from the SWPs and in some instances met regularly to share updates on each other's work. Some Connexions workers were part of one SWP, and some were co-located with another. Professionals from CAMHS, Connexions and further education were involved at a strategic level with the manager of one SWP. Local authority managers had a connection with SWPs through their role in managing IROs, chairing safeguarding boards or in their liaison role with practices, or managed a team working with similar children and young people. Thus, most of those interviewed were in a position to compare SWP practice with mainstream services, although some found it difficult to make comparisons where their knowledge was restricted to individual cases.

Local professionals' levels of understanding of the SWP programme varied between sites; in two sites it was low (SWP C and SWP D) and in a third it was mixed (SWP B). Individuals from these sites who did have an awareness of the programme variously identified its aims as greater consistency of social worker, freedom from local authority bureaucracy, more authority for front-line workers, greater creativity and faster decision making. Professionals' understanding of the SWP pilot was higher in the two sites where staff had transferred directly from the parent local authority (SWP A and SWP F) and where relationships with pilot staff were more likely to be longstanding.

Views were mixed on whether SWPs had been able to realise the expectations placed on them as the following findings illustrate.

3.1.2 SWP Practice and Planning

Children's Services managers and key professionals were consistent in their views on practice and planning within four SWPs. In three of these sites (SWP A, SWP C and SWP F) they were broadly positive, as the following quote exemplifies:

> *'They seem to be more interested in pursuing things that work rather than pursuing something because it's a local authority protocol…they have a lot of case discussions and they seem to work very closely as a team, which is a strength because they have a mixed ability of different skill sets.'*
>
> (Other Professional)

In the fourth site (SWP D), professionals considered that inexperienced staff, who may have been hesitant at first to tackle challenging issues, had been quick to seek guidance from partners and their practice had improved, aided by an open minded management style. Views were more mixed in the fifth site (SWP B); three professionals voiced major concerns about the SWP's planning and practice, including that this posed risks to children's safety. One professional felt that this pilot was improving from a low base level and sometimes performed on a par with the local authority whilst another professional considered the SWP's practice to be *'sensitive'*, and *'more present'* than the *'pressurised'* mainstream service.

3.1.3 Implementation of Plans

Of professionals who felt they had sufficient knowledge to make a judgement, those in three sites (SWP A, SWP C and SWP F) had no concerns about implementation of children's plans. Professionals felt that implementation of plans in the in-house SWP team was better than in other local authority social work teams because a lower caseload allowed time to work in a more planned way with children and young people or there had been no change.

Professionals in a fourth site felt that implementation of plans by the SWP was mixed (SWP D), though no more so than in the local authority once the new team had become accustomed to the system. In the remaining site (SWP B), views differed markedly about whether implementation of plans was satisfactory or not. While one professional found SWP staff more engaged than their local authority counterparts and another Children's Services professional found implementation of plans to be of a similar standard to that found in the local authority, other professionals interviewed felt implementation of plans was inadequate and less satisfactory than in the mainstream service. One professional from this site described their dissatisfaction:

> *'In the cases where I have been directly involved over a longer period [there has been] drift when urgent decisions are needed and information often appears to get 'lost in translation'. Social workers within the SWP are less responsive generally and do not feel that they need to share information with me in the same way as local authority social workers do…'*
>
> (Other Professional)

3.1.4 Quality of Direct Work with Children and Families

Where professionals saw the quality of direct work with children and young people as very good and often better than in the local authority, this was thought to be because work was planned rather than taken up with crisis intervention, and was more client-led and holistic. Success within the in-house SWP (SWP A) was attributed to the high calibre and creativity of the team that had been assembled and a reduced caseload, which was mentioned repeatedly as a factor that led to higher quality work by allowing more contact with individual clients:

'Brilliant, they get through a lot more direct work than say like Social Workers in other teams do, I think because they have a reduced caseload…it's not as structured…it's more client led around what's important to the young person at that time.'

(Other Professional)

Most professionals who felt they could comment on direct work in SWP B were of the view that it was of poorer quality than the mainstream service and especially so with care leavers. Some individual social workers, however, were seen to work well and maintain good relationships particularly with children with mental health problems. One professional thought there was insufficient management oversight within this SWP, which could leave staff *'floundering'* and cases stalled while reports waited months for management approval; and that a mixed degree of skills and experience within the team led to decisions being taken by some staff that were not in the interests of a child's safety:

'…cases where people have said I think that social worker is scared of that child…and therefore making decisions that are what the young person wants but aren't in the young person's best interests.'

(Other Professional)

There is considerable evidence concerning risks to the mental and physical health of looked after children and young people (Meltzer et al. 2003). All SWPs were seen to be working well around improving mental and physical health. Where pilots employed specialist staff such as mental health workers (SWP C) or a substance abuse worker (SWP A), work in this field was judged particularly successful. CAMHS partners were particularly positive in their views about SWP practice where they saw evidence of high quality in-depth work with children and young people with complex mental health issues. Conducting health assessment drop-ins at SWP premises (SWP A) was seen as a good way to engage hard-to-reach young people about health issues:

'[The SWP] offices are like a home, it's not clinical or anything…young people really don't like the thought of going through a health assessment, and I think it's easier because what they do is, they see their social worker in a particular setting and they just happen to come across a health professional in the same setting, there's no going out of their way, they're going through to the kitchen and there's [the designated nurse], she's sat in the lounge area…it's not forced…'

(Other Professional)

There was a perception that a high standard of work around supporting education and training for young people was achieved in four sites by pilots affording it a high priority, using Looked After Children Education Services (LACES) appropriately, collaborating well with partner agencies, and being both tenacious and flexible in their approach. In two sites, SWPs A and C, Connexions staff being co-located was seen as beneficial. Staff in SWP D appeared to refer less to Connexions than their local authority counterparts. This was attributed to lack of experience and to being geographically separate. Professionals considered that SWP B took a less inclusive and multi-agency approach to education and training issues than the local authority did. However the poorer standard of Personal Education Plans compared with those produced by the mainstream service was seen to improve after training. One professional described the challenges of working with this pilot as follows:

> *'A number of social workers within the SWP have not really worked effectively with my service and communication tends to be one way, i.e. I am asked to sort out crises and identify new provisions…When social workers have left the SWP I am in a position of having to start again.'*
>
> (Other Professional)

A similar picture was found in the area of safeguarding. There were no concerns in four sites – SWPs A, C, D and F - among professionals who felt qualified to comment. Good practice was assisted by staff with lower caseloads having time to focus on preventative work, with care leavers in particular, and where teams collaborated with specialist providers, such as those working with young people at risk of sexual exploitation, or had more flexibility regarding (safe) supported accommodation. SWP B was described as not investigating children's allegations of abuse until they emerged in review meetings, by which time it was often too late to take action. One partner agency had raised child protection concerns regarding children from this pilot, which they had not felt was required in respect of children cared for by the local authority.

Views about crisis intervention amongst SWPs, for example around placement breakdown, school exclusions and offending behaviour, showed a similar pattern. Three sites (SWPs A, C and F) were seen to be working well – collaboratively and creatively, and taking a preventative approach to try and ensure crises were minimised. SWP D was described as not having a 'full grasp' of children and young people who were disengaged with school but as utilising LACES well for advice. In other respects, professionals were of the view that this SWP worked as well as the mainstream service with children and young people in crisis. A professional described the fifth, SWP B, as lacking creativity regarding school exclusions and voiced concerns over the SWP's work with young offenders.

Professionals in four sites – A, B, C and D - expressed views on pilots' work with families and carers. Where professionals felt able to give an opinion, they described work in one site (SWP A) as very good, and at least on a par with mainstream work in this area. In SWP C, work with families was seen to have improved over the past ten years, although not particularly since the organisation became an SWP. The explicit focus on work with parents taken by SWP D was perceived positively. Practice by this team in relation to foster carers was described as mixed, which was seen to be due to inexperience. Views varied on SWP B. Some professionals were aware that carers were unable to contact SWP staff by phone and felt that the team did not consult parents adequately or manage work with parents well. However, one professional described instances of sensitive work with parents in challenging circumstances.

Few of these professionals had raised any concerns or made any complaints about SWPs. The main exception to this occurred in relation to SWP B, where three of the five professionals interviewed had raised concerns or complaints, at an appropriate level within the local authority, concerning safeguarding issues, poor or no communication, lack of visits, cancellation of meetings, and pilot staff stating that work had been undertaken when it had not. The local authority's view of the seriousness of these concerns had led to them instigating a formal action plan with the SWP which included regular update meetings.

3.1.5 Stability, Accessibility and Communication

Partners were asked whether, in their view, children in the pilots experienced more or fewer changes of social worker than similar LAC and care leavers in the local authority. Professionals in the in-house site (SWP A) were all of the opinion that the SWP team was more stable than

other local authority teams. In SWP D and SWP F the team was seen as stable but views were mixed on whether the team was more settled than similar teams within the local authority or settled to the same degree. A local authority manager in one of these sites pointed out that staff retention was a priority for her/his authority and its staff enjoyed good terms and conditions of employment. In SWP C, professionals felt that SWP staff were more stable than Children's Services staff but that the high level of stability that the organisation had enjoyed before it became an SWP did not change after it joined the pilot programme. An issue for this SWP that affected continuity was that nearly all young people experienced a change of key worker from a social worker to a caseworker, who was not social work qualified, when their status changed at 18 years from being 'eligible' to being 'former relevant young people'. This decision was based on age and availability of qualified social workers rather than the young person's needs. In SWP B, professionals felt that, on average, SWP children had experienced a similar number of staff changes to children in the mainstream service, but were concerned that some SWP children had experienced three changes of staff since they had been in the care of the SWP. As well as high staff turnover, some changes were seen as being due to reallocation within the team to address poor quality practice by some social workers.

Partners consistently found that accessibility and collaboration were improved by co-location. In some instances this worked in the pilots' favour, such as where Connexions workers shared premises or worked within SWP teams, or agencies operated a drop-in service for young people from the SWP premises. Local authority managers felt that SWPs were disadvantaged when they were isolated from the rest of Children's Services staff. In two cases, SWP offices were judged to be geographically inaccessible (SWP A and SWP B). However, in SWP A's case, this was compensated for by their premises being a user-friendly and homely space that was welcoming to children and young people. Professionals found that three of the pilots were more likely to use answerphones than local authorities (SWP B, SWP D and SWP F), which they attributed to the small size of the organisations. In two of these pilots (SWPs D and F), staff returned calls swiftly. In the third (SWP B), some professionals complained that staff did not return calls, the manager was rarely available, and emails were not confidential, as practitioners shared an email address.

A number of comments were made highlighting SWP C's capacity for collaboration at a strategic level, on health, education and transition issues. Professionals described how collaboration in planning and decision making about children and young people was aided by regular structured meetings. One professional described how it was beneficial to work with the small SWP team compared with the mainstream service:

> *'Because they're a smaller team you can actually get round a table with them all, you know, and so there, so there are benefits in that way that… but with… other social work teams then we would do it more through the managers and team leaders and they'd devolve the information to the teams… probably have a bit more face to face with the Practice Social Workers… so they've got that information first hand…it's far easier through the Practice.'*
>
> (Other Professional)

3.1.6 Impact of SWPs on Local Authorities and Other Agencies

Key professionals varied in their views regarding pilots' impact on their organisations. Some, such as workers in health and youth offending services who commented on SWP A, believed that the good working relationships between them and the SWP had a positive effect on

targeting of their services. Similarly, an education worker in one site commented that the SWP's work had a positive impact on his agency's work. Others however, indicated that the SWP did not have an impact on the work of their own organisation or other agencies, or said that they could not comment. One professional felt that SWP B had not had a positive effect on his/her own agency as they felt that the relationship was 'tense, rather than professional'.

In terms of perceived impact on child care social work in local authorities, most thought that the presence of SWPs had not had a great impact or they were unsure of what effect they had had. A professional in one site thought that the SWP had had a positive impact in that they took cases out of local authority teams so relieving pressure (SWP D). A minority identified some negative impacts. One professional described tensions between the local authority and SWP B regarding care planning for SWP children, these views reflected the deteriorating relationship between the SWP and the local authority. Another professional raised further concerns about the impact of the poor quality of SWP B's practice on the local authority's safeguarding work, these problems were described as creating more work for child protection staff within the local authority.

3.1.7 Perceptions of Children's and Young People's Satisfaction with SWPs

Several key professionals across all SWPs commented favourably on the relationships between pilot staff and looked after children and care leavers. They spoke of the enthusiasm and hard work pilot staff devoted to engaging with young people, the sensitivity of some SWP social workers to children's needs, and adaptable, open-door policies which were inviting to young people. It was more difficult for interviewees to establish children's and young people's satisfaction with SWPs because, although many agencies formally evaluated satisfaction with their services, these evaluations did not identify SWP children and young people.

3.1.8 Summary of Other Professionals' Perspectives

The messages from this group of informants were consistent across a range of issues. Most professionals considered that the pilots' restricted caseloads resulted in time being made available for planning and for high quality and focused direct work with children and families. The small size and accessibility of most pilots were seen to facilitate communication with both children and families and with other organisations. Interagency work was mostly judged to be positive, especially when supported by co-location or specialist posts. Informants were also fairly consistent in their assessments of the individual pilots. While the initial lack of experience of staff in one SWP was noted, its staff were considered to have developed skills and confidence over time. In the one pilot most frequently judged to be a cause for concern, failings were identified in relation to consistency of staff, accessibility and, most worryingly, competence in relation to safeguarding. Generally, it appeared to be too early to discern evidence of the pilots' impact on the wider local service landscape.

3.2 IRO Perceptions

Twenty-one IROs were interviewed by telephone early in 2011, including five from SWP B and four from each of the other SWP sites. Between them, these IROs had substantial experience of chairing reviews involving SWP children.

3.2.1 Children's and Young People's Attendance and Participation in Reviews

Ten of the 21 IRO s interviewed considered that children's and young people's attendance at reviews was no better or worse than that of those looked after by the local authority. Some IROs felt that the local authorities achieved quite high levels of attendance from children and young people at reviews anyway, while others pointed out that 'not all young people want to attend their reviews'. IROs were aware that children and young people who were shy or who had sensitive issues that they were uneasy about discussing might find participation in reviews difficult and they described a range of strategies used to promote attendance and participation.

A third of IROs (7) felt that SWPs had elicited higher levels of children's and young people's attendance at reviews: IROs from SWP B, SWP C and SWP F were more likely to feel this. Increased levels of attendance were attributed to the time and energy SWP staff invested in encouraging attendance:

> *'…there's a lot more emphasis from the workers concerned to promote …the young people's attendance.'*
>
> (IRO)

Children can attend reviews without actively participating and levels of participation were considered separately. Over half (12) felt that pilot children's level of participation in reviews was no different from that for children and young people looked after by local authorities. Some felt that other factors, such as a child's age or personality, were more significant in determining the degree of engagement. Others noted that practice could vary both within the SWP and within the local authority:

> *'I've not noticed that it's different, I have to say, it doesn't, the reviews I do with those children don't feel any different to the reviews I do with other children.'*
>
> (IRO)

However, seven IROs (mainly from SWP C and SWP F) thought that participation in reviews was discernibly better for children in SWPs. IROs from SWP F felt that this reflected children's and young people's higher level of engagement with the SWP organisation and familiarity with the building as well as good relationships with staff:

> *'I think there is a difference with this team and maybe that's the way they've been working with …the participation of children …going to the place and activities there and maybe that's a reflection of the perhaps improved quality of the relationship between the workers in that particular team and the young people, so it's good participation.'*
>
> (IRO)

Two IROs gave examples (one from SWP B, one from SWP F) where they felt that SWP children's participation in reviews had been poorer than they would expect. Both these cases involved social workers who had failed to include either a child or a parent in a review.

3.2.2 Implementation and Follow-Up of Plans

Half the IROs (11) thought that implementation of plans by SWP staff was similar to follow-up within the local authority. The majority view in SWP A, SWP C and SWP F was that most plans were followed up, as was the case within mainstream services, and quality of practice varied amongst staff in SWPs as much as in local authorities. Two IROs in SWP B mentioned that

implementation of plans was slower than in the local authority, amongst some SWP staff in particular. One of the IROs from each of the pilot sites felt that implementation of plans had improved, which they attributed to a number of factors: having a multi-disciplinary team; having a smaller caseload and a higher level of contact with children and young people; more forward planning including around post-18 transitions; and improved supervision.

3.2.3 IRO Views of Direct work with Children and Young People, Families and Carers

Eight IROs from four pilot sites expressed the view that direct work with children and young people in SWPs was similar in quality to work with the cohort prior to the pilot being established. In SWP A and SWP C, this was attributed to pre-pilot standards being high. However, some SWP B IROs felt anticipated improvements had not materialised and one SWP D IRO felt that improvement was not yet apparent due to the high proportion of newly qualified social workers still '*finding their feet*' who were struggling with the complexities and responsibilities of the job.

Seven IROs, including three from SWP F, felt that direct work with children and young people had improved for a number of reasons. Some IROs thought there was a higher level of contact, some of which was achieved either by inviting young people into SWP premises, especially where these were more accessible and welcoming than council offices, or through promoting young people's participation in shaping services. Relations between children and young people and staff were described as more trusting, flexible and informal where staff had developed group work and organised social activities:

> *'…they can do more [direct work], you do those flexible evenings and it's getting to know your Social Worker out of that more formal setting isn't it? They went to a play …about a young girl who was being sexually exploited, so that was good because they could identify with bits of it …'*
>
> (IRO)

In common with the perceptions of the other professionals described above, IRO views regarding SWP B were more mixed than elsewhere. Some expressed misgivings about the quality of the pilot's work with young people, citing cases where visits had been neglected for almost a year. IROs felt that the high number of out-of-area caseloads in this pilot impeded direct work. Some individual social workers in the team were seen to be working well, however, and one SWP B IRO in contrast to the others, found there was '*much more preparedness to do direct work*' and more organisational openness than in the local authority.

In terms of direct work with carers and families, there was a degree of consensus amongst IROs that there had been little change in this area of work since the pilots had been operating. However, there were exceptions to this view with reports of improvements in SWP D where there was a specific focus on engagement with parents.

3.2.4 IRO Perceptions of Continuity and Stability

IROs from SWP A, SWP C, SWP D and SWP F reported stability amongst SWP teams; although they noted that, in SWPs B and D, children and young people had experienced a change of social worker at the point of handover to the SWP. The ring-fenced nature of the pilots' caseloads was seen to promote stability:

> *'…because they're not dealing with any child protection issues, they're not getting any new cases coming in, they might lose one or two along the*

way… but basically they've got a fairly static community there, unlike other teams…'

(IRO)

In SWP C, continuity of staffing was perceived to have been carried forward from pre-pilot days. In SWP F, one IRO perceived there to have been far fewer changes in the SWP team than the in-house service at a time of reorganisation in the latter and, in SWP A in particular, IROs noted more stability in the SWP team as compared with other local authority teams, where there had been a recent recruitment drive to replace the many agency staff in order to cut costs:

'…in a six month period some of the children [not in the SWP] have had three social workers, you know, I haven't seen any change for the pilot and I think it's because the staff like working on the pilot, so they must have some, a little bit more autonomy I guess, you know, or they must be enjoying their work…'

(IRO)

In contrast to IROs elsewhere, SWP B IROs were disappointed at the high number of staff changes, staff absence and reallocation of cases within the small SWP team, which had compounded the impact of the initial change of social worker for some children and young people particularly:

'I wasn't expecting [the SWP] to sack somebody after less than a year, for somebody else to leave after a year, somebody to be off on long term sick and for other [case] reallocations to happen.'

(IRO)

3.2.5 IRO Perceptions of Accessibility of Social Workers

Most IROs found social workers to be as accessible to them as before, if not more so, and reported good communication between reviews if difficulties arose or plans changed. At least one IRO in each site thought that staff were more accessible to young people, through working more flexibly. Smaller teams allowed them to be more aware of each other's whereabouts or each other's cases when answering calls to the office:

'They seem to be able to access social workers for you very quickly if you need to talk to them about something…whereas when you're working with the other teams, perhaps there's a lot more going on, because they're so much bigger and you're working in bigger area offices, that maybe there's not so much knowledge about who's doing what and where are they and how contactable they are.'

(IRO)

Three of the five IROs working with SWP B were, however, damning in their descriptions of the difficulties they had encountered in accessing SWP social workers and managers.

'The communication with SWP is nightmarish, they don't have direct email access…each child's confidential information [you] have to email it to a pool of emails, you don't really know whether the emails are being read or accessed … it's really very hard to get in touch with these social workers, often when you ring them you've been told that they're working from home or whatever it is and you wait for ages before they call you back… What I find appalling in the SWP is that the managers aren't available for you to speak to them directly, let alone for the social workers to find out, or

> *whoever's on duty to find out and come back to you…no one seems to be picking the phone up.'*
>
> (IRO)

They were concerned that children and young people might experience the same problems in contacting their social worker, although they had received no formal complaints from young people.

3.2.6 Summary of IRO Perceptions

The IROs were evenly split about whether SWPs showed any improvement on local authority practice in respect of children's attendance at reviews, implementation and follow-up of plans and direct work with children and young people. In SWP A and SWP C, IROs emphasised that standards of practice had been high prior to the implementation of SWPs.

Where IROs identified a difference in practice, this was described as a greater commitment to engaging with children and young people and a more concentrated focus on LAC or care leavers. In common with the other professionals interviewed, restricted caseloads were highlighted and these were felt to be particularly valuable at a time when cuts had impacted on local authority social work services. Pilots with child friendly premises were seen to elicit higher levels of engagement from children and young people and the encouragement given to young people to contribute to shaping the work of SWPs was also viewed positively. With the exception of SWP D, IROs perceived there to be little difference between local authority social work practice and SWPs regarding engagement with carers and birth families.

Views on individual pilots were consistent with those of the other professionals interviewed; Most IROs interviewed regarding SWP B expressed serious concerns about this pilot in relation to staff turnover, accessibility and quality of practice. Views on the SWP D pilot were more mixed in that IROs felt that the team was generally inexperienced but practice was considered to have improved over time.

3.3 Local Authority Commissioners' Perspectives on the Pilots

Ten local authority commissioners from the five pilot sites were interviewed in 2011; the interviewees included strategic and operational commissioners as well as local authority finance officers. The telephone interviews aimed to capture their perspectives on the benefits and risks of implementing SWPs, on financing SWPs, and on the ways in which the pilots had impacted both on the work of Children's Services and on the local authorities' commissioning practices.

3.3.1 Identified Benefits

The benefits of the pilots were felt by some commissioners to be hard to evidence, and some were disappointed in the actual reported outcomes as aspirations had been high – '*no statistic that knocks your socks off*'. It was suggested that a period of at least four years was required to achieve concrete results, as two years was considered insufficient for impacts to emerge and be measurable.

In the case of SWP C where the pilot had been built on an existing contract with a voluntary organisation, the main benefits of the pilot were that it had helped create a '*positive culture*' within the organisation and had achieved greater recognition for existing work. Although it was felt difficult to disentangle new benefits, at the time of the interviews, the local authority was

sufficiently positive to be considering commissioning an SWP to work with looked after children under 16 in addition to continuing SWP C's work with over 16s.

Commissioners for SWP F, which was the only SWP to have been created by social workers moving out of the 'parent' local authority, felt that placement stability for its young people was the main benefit achieved. This was thought to compare favourably with the record of the other three Throughcare teams in the area as well as with that of the under 12s teams. An essential element in this was felt to be the quality of relationships with children and young people and the responsiveness of the SWP team which provided its own out-of-hours system. However, analysis of SSDA903 data showed that SWP F was less successful in reducing placement change rates than other SWPs (see Appendix 4).

Another commissioner commented that SWP F had enabled the team to create an environment that allowed social workers to do their job and improve outcomes for children. The benefit was located in the SWP's acknowledgement of social workers as experts at the frontline. Other commissioners noted that the pilots had shown that supporting looked after children was not the *'exclusive domain of local authorities'*. Other more specific benefits concerned this pilot's capacity to integrate children's views and the realisation of child/young person friendly premises.

The benefits in SWP B were considered negligible since it was felt that the local authority could have achieved the same results.

3.3.2 Identified Risks

Commissioners identified several risks in implementing the SWP model. They consistently pointed to the risk of *'unforeseen, un-programmed and extra ordinary expenditure'* that would be outside local authorities' control. The capacity of the SWPs to manage their budget was considered a high risk given that some of the pilots were newly formed organisations.

A key risk which a number referred to obliquely was that SWPs would not deliver dramatically different outcomes for looked after children and young people: this was judged an unrealistic goal for the target groups in question within such a short timeframe. This view was echoed by a member of the EAG who commented: '*People underestimate what major problems children and families sometimes bring along*'. Commissioners noted that these challenges might make it difficult for pilots to deliver on the outcomes framework.

Ensuring that the pilot would comply with local authority standards and deliver good standards of care was a risk anticipated at the outset by some:

> *'The fundamental risk…the real issue for us was making sure we had enough governance to make sure the kids were well looked after…because you can always redress a contract, you can always evaluate a project but the kid never has that year again do they?'*
>
> (Local Authority Commissioner)

Conversely, there was a risk that the service would be seen within the local authority as an *'elite service'* or that the quality of work difficult for local authority managers to control:

> *'We don't know what they're doing… it's a huge amount of trust invested in them to represent the council properly, practice in accordance with the right principles and deliver a good service…'*
>
> (Local Authority Commissioner)

A major criticism made of SWP B was that, for some young people, instead of experiencing continuity of worker as they had done in the past with the local authority, they had experienced two or three different social workers whilst in the care of the pilot (staff turnover in the pilots is shown in Chapter 2). Since continuity of care was a key objective for the pilots, it was suggested that SWP B was at risk of not fully realising the aspirations of the model.

3.3.3 Pilot Finances

The complexities of local authority finances clearly made for difficulties in achieving precision about costs and benefits. Two local authorities had made use of unit costs in the tendering process but one of these acknowledged that these were '*a best estimate*' as actual costs were unknown. None of those interviewed considered that the SWP model had resulted in savings for the local authority. Views differed as to whether the pilots had proved costly. In two local authorities, commissioners were clear that the pilots had cost more than the standard service with one commissioner attributing the high cost to the out-of-hours service and another saying, '*we could have done it cheaper ourselves unfortunately*'. In another two authorities, commissioners saw the SWP as cost neutral although this was in the context of the cushioning afforded by the DCSF/DfE funding. In a fifth authority, there was disagreement with one commissioner seeingthe value of the contract as equivalent to in-house services and another describing it as '*an expensive experiment*'. In the local authority with the in-house model, full independence for the pilot had been seen as financially unsustainable.

The DCSF/DfE funding was used to cover project managers' posts and for a range of costs attached to start-up including recruitment, building adaptations, furniture, fixtures and fittings and IT equipment. Local authorities submitted bids for this funding and the amounts received varied. Most interviewed were clear that the pilots would not have been viable without this additional support. As noted in Chapter 1, pilots were also able to draw on a wide range of local authority services without charge.

Most commissioners were also explicit that it was too risky to allow SWPs full control of the placement budget because one expensive placement could prove overwhelming for a small organisation. It was also emphasised that, because the placement budget was subject to extreme fluctuations that reflected crises in children's lives, commissioners felt a need to control and manage this form of spending. This was particularly the case at a time of restrictions on local government spending:

> *'It's difficult within the political climate that we're in now to say that …social work practices could have the autonomy that the idea presents…because local authorities have to absolutely agree to every single penny that is spent'*
>
> (Local Authority Commissioner)

In some sites, particularly in SWP C, commissioners noted that recent increases in the numbers of LAC and care leavers had placed even greater demands on stretched finances and that these demands had been passed on to SWPs.

3.3.4 Impact of SWPs on Children's Services

Three of the pilots (SWPs A, C and F) were perceived to be an integral part of their local authorities' spectrum of Children's Services and to fit well with local approaches. Such pilots were described in Children's Services plans as having the same objectives as other local Children's Services.

SWP F was described as one of four Throughcare services in the area, albeit offering a different *'innovative'* service delivery model. The in-house SWP (SWP A) was said to replicate the multi-agency working approach that was a strong feature of this local authority, and was described in its children's plan as *'another arm of the service'*. SWP C was a '*compartmentalised*' service and its role and remit with care leavers aged 16+years was easily differentiated from, and complementary to, in-house services:

> *'it's part of the Looked After Children's strategy, we've just completed a multi-agency Looked After Children's strategy and they're in there and seem very much part of looking, you know, continuing with services for Looked After Children and they sit on the Corporate Parenting Group …and so, you know, they're very much fully involved in, in what we do.'*
>
> (Local Authority Commissioner)

In contrast, the two other pilots were seen as clearly different from, and in some senses, as conflicting with strategic plans for local authority Children's Services. There was a dilemma for one local authority in financially supporting a small service while at the same time attempting to achieve economies of scale in the local authority as a whole. Similarly in another local authority, there was ambivalence about the pilot in relation to local Children's Services, and the SWP was described as *'part of the service and not part of the service'*.

The pilots were not on the whole thought to have impacted on other local authority Children's Services functions. Given the nature of the pilots' cohorts, which were in most cases children who had been looked after for some years, there was no direct perceived impact associated with any SWPs on rates of, or processes of admission to care. Nor had the pilots generally impacted on the local authorities' safeguarding function in any notable way. Only the in-house SWP (SWP A) was taking full responsibility for managing child protection cases rather than referring such cases to a relevant local authority team, although the other pilots did continue to work with children and young people alongside local authority safeguarding teams in such cases. One commissioner commented that, in future, the local authority would aim to be clearer about the responsibilities of SWP staff in terms of care proceedings as this had been uncertain in practice.

SWP D's emphasis on children's participation in governance was perceived to have had a positive impact on the attitudes of local authority staff:

> *'It's changed the flexibility and adaptability of the staff group and the mindset of the staff group…the principles that have underpinned some of the Practice's practice have been useful to observe and try to emulate like really integrating children into service design…service development and monitoring of service and to be accountable to young people…I wouldn't say we didn't do them, but we certainly do them with a different energy…'*
>
> (Local Authority Commissioner)

3.3.5 Impact on Commissioning

Most of those interviewed said they personally had learnt from the experience of commissioning an SWP but that their local authority's commissioning processes had not changed significantly as a result. Some of this learning was around the composition and scope of the ideal SWP. For example, one commissioner suggested that the original idea of caseloads of 10 children and SWPs with 10 staff was clearly naïve and a more pragmatic approach to caseload size needed to be incorporated in specifications. In another local authority, commissioners stressed the

importance of being '*more output based than financially based*' and for those commissioning SWPs in future to '*consider the outputs of your specification before you go to market, consider what you want to achieve*.' Elsewhere, commissioners were keen to emphasise the importance of choosing the right kind of premises that young people could access easily, and of building this requirement into the specification, alongside a strong emphasis on young people's participation.

However, broader lessons for commissioning were identified in one site where interviewees felt that the experience of commissioning SWPs had increased the local authority's confidence in commissioning independent children's services:

> *'These are complicated matters but actually you can work through them and you can put together a contract that actually works and you can monitor it in a way that keeps everybody safe and you will get …something which is long arm but actually delivers exactly the same as what local authority does…'*
>
> (Local Authority Commissioner)

In retrospect, a number of commissioners felt that service specifications about recruitment and staffing, especially expectations around management and supervision should have been clearer. The importance of directing the SWP to appoint the '*right people*' to manage the teams was emphasised and some commissioners felt that too much had been required from the local authority in the way of management and supervision of pilot staff.

3.3.6 Future Prospects for SWPs

Commissioners identified a number of threats to the future of SWPs: one commissioner thought that a future proliferation of SWPs would be threatening to local authorities trying to recruit social workers to their own in-house teams. It was also possible that local authorities' preference for commissioning services from known organisations with a track record might disempower frontline staff from coming forward to set up an SWP in the future.

One of the main threats identified was found in the current financial climate of budgetary cuts, making local authorities much more risk averse. More needed to be done to support local authorities to take calculated risks. As one commissioner commented:

> '*if the government really want to transform social care they really need to look at how they will help local authorities to let go*'.
>
> (Local Authority Commissioner)

The experience of one pilot site where the SWP's contract was not being renewed had led the local authority to question the feasibility of the 'professional partnership' SWP model since issues of dependence, interdependence and independence from the local authority had proved so complex. While initially supportive of the professional partnership model adopted in SWP B, the commissioners in this local authority concluded that this pilot had not been successful.

3.4 Care Planning and Reviews

This section reports data from two sources: interviews with 80 children and young people in 2010 and 145 in 2011 (97 from pilots; 48 from comparison sites) and findings from the analysis of 45 case files. These files were accessed with consent from the 45 children and young people concerned; 25 in SWPs and 20 in comparison sites. Twenty-six were care leavers aged over 16

years and 19 were looked after children aged under 16. Twenty-five were female and 20 were male. We explored their care plans, pathways plans and supporting documents to identify the extent to which care plans were in place and acted upon.

3.4.1 Extent to which Plans were in Place

There were clear current care plans in place for around half the children and young people; slightly less than half in SWPs (11/25) and slightly more than half in comparison sites (11/20). The slightly higher proportion of care plans in some comparison sites may be due to the use, in two comparison sites, of effective IT systems that updated care plans directly from review minutes. In one site, a new care plan appeared to be automatically produced from the IRO's minutes following a review and could be read as a standalone document. When existing review minutes, which were not fed directly into care plans, were considered alongside existing care plans, the proportion of current plans in place increased substantially. By this measure, comprehensive current plans were in place for nearly two-thirds of the cases studied, whether from SWPs or comparison sites.

Ten care plans or pathways plans and supporting documents were insufficient, falling short in a number of ways of the regulations regarding, for example, placement and plans for education or how young people would be assisted to obtain employment or other meaningful activity. Some plans only recorded what had happened previously, rather than also planning for the future and permanence. This was noticeably the case for pathways plans for four young women who were pregnant, or recent mothers, two of whom were from pilots and two from comparison sites. Six care plans were out of date. In two cases, review minutes which were intended to update the care plan had not been written up three months after the LAC review, so the care plan did not include significant recent changes. In four cases (two in SWPs; two in comparison sites), IROs or managers had identified that a current care plan was not in place and this was not remedied. Sometimes gaps in files were not remedied several months later. In one SWP, there was no assessment of a young person's regular and frequent overnight stays, and five months after an IRO had identified gaps in the recording of the Personal Education Plan (PEP), Health Assessment Plan, statutory visits, transfer summary and chronology, these were still not in place. Similarly, in a comparison site, a manager had previously noted that the care plan needed updating; nine months later, when we viewed the file, this was still not done.

3.4.2 Children's and Young People's Awareness of and Involvement in Care Planning and Reviews

The majority of children and young people interviewed in both pilot and comparison sites could give some definition of 'care plan' or 'pathways plan', using the terms to refer to both the plans and the review minutes. There was no significant increase in understanding of care/pathways plans between the interviews in 2010 and 2011. Indeed, the three young people from pilot sites who did not know the terms 'care plan' and 'pathways plan' in 2010, still did not understand them in 2011. Care leavers were far more likely to know what a pathways plan was than those aged under 16; around one-third of LAC interviewed in 2011 did not know what a care plan was.

Many children and young people from both pilot and comparison sites were not clear about the precise contents of their plans, even if they understood the term. Some thought plans were irrelevant, and some had never seen their own plan but would have liked to have done so:

> *'A care plan, is it like where they take information about you and you know like, they know everything about you but you don't know anything about them? And every, every information that they've got, you don't get, they give*

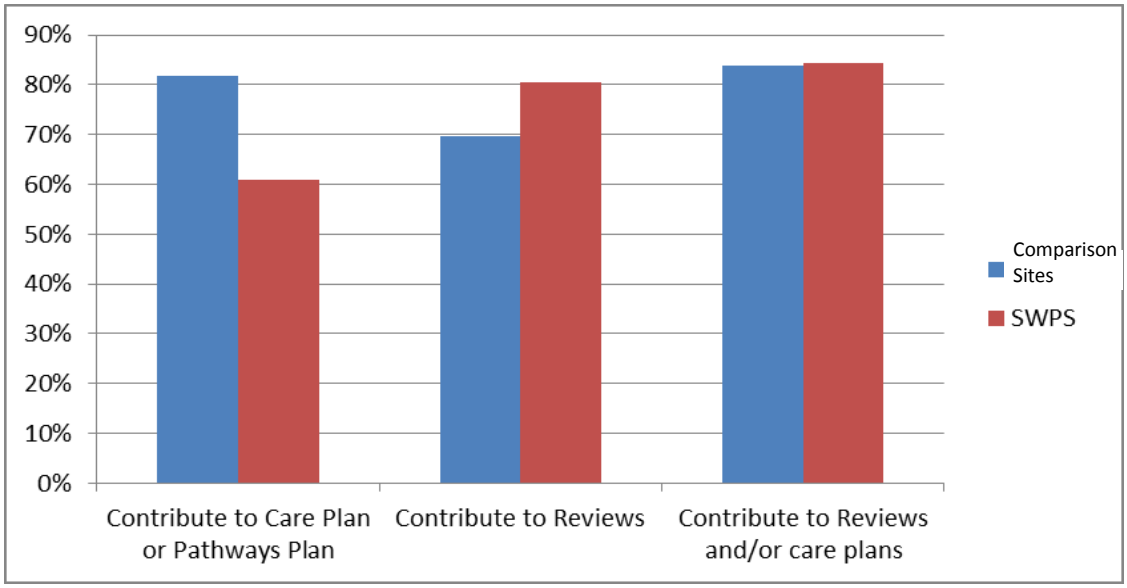
it to your parents so that they know … sometimes I try and like sneak in so I can have a look what they're trying to give [foster carer] and that.'
(13 year old, looked after boy, comparison site)

From the case files it appeared that, in both pilot and comparison sites, the same proportion (around four-fifths) of children and young people were involved in reviews and care planning. A slightly smaller proportion (three-quarters) of children and young people in both comparison and pilot sites reported in interviews held in 2011 that they were involved in contributing their views to care plans and/or reviews. This is an improvement on the lack of involvement in care planning and reviews identified by Thomas's (2011) commentary and may reflect recent changes in response to new guidance (DCSF 2010). One girl described her reviews thus:

'it's good, because we, we did actually get a chance like when we have our reviews and that, we have to like air our views and say our voice and stuff like that, and we chose to stay here and we said we didn't want to move.'
(13 year old, looked after girl, comparison site)

There were differences found in the interview data concerning which processes children and young people reported being involved in, with more in comparison sites reporting involvement in care planning, and more in SWPs reporting involvement in reviews.

Figure 3.1 Percentages of those children and young people who responded reporting involvement in care planning and reviews 2011



Although this high proportion of young people said they contributed their views and understood everything, only a minority were asked who they would like to have attending their review meetings and very few felt they were involved in setting the agenda.

A small number of children and young people said they chose not to be involved in reviews. One young person explained why:

'it's not compulsory for me… it doesn't feel normal and I don't like people really talking that about me when I'm there. It makes you feel, it makes you feel special when you don't want to be special for no reason at all.'

(15 year old, looked after boy, SWP)

In SWP B, all the children and young people were involved (except for one who had chosen not to take part). In the other SWPs, small numbers of children and young people wanted more involvement. In two comparison sites, all the young people said they were involved in either care planning or reviews, in one of these a child also chaired their own review. The practice of chairing their own reviews was, however, more widespread in SWP A, SWP B and SWP F. These differences in practice, however, may relate more to differences between IROs in host local authorities.

The children and young people in both pilot and comparison sites who said they would like to have been more involved, described a variety of barriers to participation. They talked of feeling upset by reviews that focused only on negative issues or what they were doing wrong; not being informed that meetings were occurring; attending but not being asked their opinion; being told off for talking; being too scared to speak in front of others who had been invited; and not understanding because professionals used '*big words*'. One suggested that young people should be paid to attend, and in SWP D young people reported receiving vouchers for attendance at reviews.

When interviewed in 2011, most of those children and young people who answered the question said that their experience of reviews had not changed since joining the SWP, but around one third said reviews had got better. These improvements were concentrated in SWP D, where more than half of the 15 young people who answered the question said that reviews were better than when they were with the local authority. Differences identified included starting to attend reviews; exercising choice about who attended and where reviews were held; and feeling supported by their workers:

'So is there any difference between the reviews with [SWP] and the ones with [the Council]?'

'Yeah, [worker] like sticks up for me a bit more, like because ... people want to put me [somewhere else] at the minute, I'm not wanting to go.... She's not letting me.'

(13 year old, looked after girl, SWP)

Three care leavers from SWP C said reviews were worse since joining the SWP but this was attributed to a range of reasons other than staff input which included the perception, common among care leavers, that reviews were less relevant as young people got older.

3.4.3 Involvement of Others in Care Plans and Reviews

Analysis of care plans showed that, in almost every care plan where children and young people were placed with foster carers or in supported accommodation, these carers were involved in care planning either through attendance at reviews or by prior consultation. Although children and young people generally appreciated the attendance of carers, this was not always positive. One young person interviewed from a comparison site did not want her carers at the review but they were still invited against her wishes. Another young person, from an SWP, felt invitations to reviews were not as well organised as prior to joining the SWP.

The care plans suggested that SWPs tended to invite more professionals to reviews. SWP A appeared to be particularly consistent in this. In this site, review notes showed that a wide range of professionals attended reviews and there was a record maintained of all consultation that had taken place in preparation for a review. Case files also noted those people that had been consulted in the preparation of PEPs and Care Plans. If any significant individuals had not attended review meetings or fed into plans/reports, there was usually an explanation provided. The professionals consulted across all sites included Early Years services, education, Youth Offending Teams, Connexions, and health (including doctors and school nurses). The wide range of professionals attending reviews was confirmed by the interviews with children and young people.

In both SWPs and comparison sites, the different professionals involved appeared to work to a common agenda in developing and implementing care plans. There was no notable difference in the overall numbers of children and young people receiving support from other agencies; a lack of involvement from other professionals was noticeable for a few care leavers, but in some cases this was clearly in response to their wishes. In SWP A, SWP D and SWP F however, plans indicated a wider range of interventions from other agencies. For example, a range of different mental health and educational services was involved.

The care plans also indicated a tendency for SWPs to involve parents more in reviews than did comparison sites. The greatest contrast in this respect was found between SWP F, where in every case parents were invited to reviews and if they did not attend, the reasons were clearly noted, and one comparison site, where no parents attended in the five reviews studied, and there were no reasons given on the file. Parental attendance at reviews was a marked form of improvement for two young people interviewed in pilot sites. But one young person mentioned that he had not been warned his father would be at his review, and he was very shocked as they had not spoken to each other for so long.

3.4.4 Changes in Care Plans

There were more changes recorded in the care plans of children and young people in comparison sites (18) than in SWPs (9). It was however difficult in some cases to say whether care plans had changed when children joined the pilots as at the time of our fieldwork, comprehensive and up-to-date case files had not always been transferred over to the SWPs by the host local authorities. Changes that occurred related to contact, placement, education, employment or training, moves to independence and pregnancy. In both pilot (3 times) and comparison sites (11 times), these changes were usually responses to changes in young people circumstances, and followed on from the success or failure of previous interventions or assessments. For example, plans for placement were changed following placement breakdown or assessments of the suitability of proposed carers. However, in one case file in each of three SWPs, the reasons for changes in placement were not made clear, signalling either a lack of assessment or a lack of recording.

In both comparison and pilot sites, actions were clearly identified in nearly two-thirds of the care plans and review notes studied. In comparison sites, actions were more frequently accompanied by clear timescales than in pilot sites. Actions tended to be identified, timed and tracked through LAC reviews but less so in pathway plans which used terms like ‘on-going’ or ‘as needed’ to indicate timing. Some pathways plans were described as ‘on–hold’ because the young person’s circumstances or wishes had changed substantially and new plans had not yet been put in place.

Two-thirds of identified actions in files were followed up and achieved within the given timescales and in half the cases where actions were not achieved, some explanation was provided. However, in all but one of the nine sites, there was at least one example of unexplained absences of recording, assessment or intervention. In one SWP, the plan appeared to have become less detailed over time and there were no details of pathway planning apart from the statement 'young person will receive support until the age of 21'. Such statements were also made in comparison sites. In some situations, the lack of clear, timed actions seemed to be a deliberate response to care leavers' wishes for more flexible and relaxed service provision. But even with looked after children, there were cases where it was not possible to identify whether agreed actions had been completed and if not why not. In one comparison site, statutory visits had not been recorded. In another, increased parental contact had been planned for more than nine months, but the worker had still not arranged a meeting with parents. In one SWP, a laptop had been requested six months previously and there was no indication of whether or not it had been provided.

3.4.5 Summary of Care Planning and Reviews

There were very few substantial differences found with regard to the practice of care planning and reviews between pilot and comparison sites. The quality of both documentation and planning varied considerably and this was found within social work teams as well as in the intervention (SWPs) and control arms (comparison LAs) of the study. Actions were clearly identified in most of the care plans studied but care plans from comparison sites were more likely to have time-scales attached to actions. There were examples of gaps in information and lack of planning or follow-up found in files from both comparison and pilot sites.

Most children and young people were involved in reviews and there were some examples in both SWPs and comparison sites of innovative approaches to involving children in these meetings. A member of the evaluation's Young People Advisory Group Meeting suggested that in some places this improvement could be attributed to new guidance for IROs (DCSF 2010) as well as to changes in social work practice. A third of SWP children and young people felt that their reviews had improved since they joined the SWP; most of these were from SWP D. However, most SWP children and young people saw no change. The pilots appeared more likely than the comparison sites to invite a wide range of professionals to reviews, perhaps reflecting their explicit focus on multi-disciplinary work (see Chapter 2).

Chapter 3 Summary Points

- Other professionals interviewed in pilot sites considered that SWP staff's restricted caseloads resulted in time being made available for planning and for high quality and focused direct work with children and families. These views were echoed by the IROs interviewed.

- Other professionals judged that the small size and accessibility of most pilots facilitated communication with both children and families and with other organisations. Interagency work was mostly seen to be positive, especially when supported by co-location or specialist posts.

- Other professionals and IROs were consistent in their assessments of the individual pilots. While the initial lack of experience of staff in SWP D was noted, staff in this pilot were considered to have developed skills and confidence over time. SWP B was the pilot most frequently judged to be a cause for concern: failings were identified in relation

to consistency of staffing, accessibility, direct work with children and, most worryingly, competence in relation to safeguarding.

- IROs interviewed were divided as to whether SWPs showed any improvement on local authority practice in respect of children's attendance at reviews, implementation and follow-up of plans and direct work with children and young people. Standards of practice were considered to have been high prior to the implementation of SWPs in some sites.

- Where IROs identified a difference, this involved a heightened commitment to engaging with children and young people and a more concentrated focus on LAC or care leavers. Engagement with carers and families was felt to be particularly good in SWP D but no difference with local authority practice was discerned elsewhere.

- IROs reported that pilots with child friendly premises elicited higher levels of engagement from children and young people and they commented positively on the encouragement given to young people to contribute to the development and governance of SWPs.

- Interviews with local authority commissioners identified benefits such as stability of placements, a positive culture, a more responsive service, improved quality of direct work with children and young people, the integration of children's views into the organisation and user-friendly premises.

- The risks perceived by commissioners mainly concerned the capacity of the SWPs to manage their budgets in a context where local government was experiencing budget restrictions. This risk was considered high since some of the pilots were newly formed, unknown organisations and involved the possibility of unanticipated extraordinary expenditure that would be outside local authorities' control. There were also risks that the pilots would fail to deliver adequate standard of care or deliver on such promises as staff stability.

- None of the commissioners interviewed considered that the pilots had resulted in savings for the local authority. Views differed as to whether the pilots had proved costly with two commissioners explicit that the pilots had cost more than the standard service. Elsewhere, commissioners saw the SWP as cost neutral although this was in the context of the cushioning afforded by the DCSF/DfE funding. The local authority that opted for the in-house model considered that independence was not financially viable for the SWP.

- Commissioners were agreed that the timeframe of the pilots was too short to allow measurable outcomes to emerge. They were not able to identify any specific impact on local authority social work or commissioning procedures resulting from the pilots.

- The analysis of care plans found few differences in the practice of care planning and reviews between pilot and comparison sites. The quality of both documentation and planning varied considerably and this was found within social work teams as well as in the intervention (SWPs) and control (comparison LAs) arms of the study. There were examples of gaps in information and lack of planning or follow-up found in files from both comparison and pilot sites.

- Most children and young people were involved in reviews and there were some examples in both SWPs and comparison sites of innovative approaches to involving

children in these meetings. The SWPs appeared more likely than the comparison sites to include parents and a wide range of professionals in reviews.

- Most of the SWP children and young people who felt that their reviews had improved since they joined the SWP were from SWP D. However, most SWP children and young people saw no change.

Chapter 4 - Children's and Young People's Views and Experiences

This chapter reports findings from 225 interviews with 169 individual children and young people, some of whom were interviewed twice. These data are used to explore children's and young people's perspectives on the services they received. In many cases, there were similarities in findings from pilot and comparison sites; however, where differences arise these are described.

The interviews took place in two stages: Round One in 2010 and Round Two in 2011 (see Appendix 2 for the interview schedule used with SWP children in 2010; other interview schedules are available on request from the research team). We have adopted this terminology to make it clear that Round Two interviews involved a different sample, only a proportion of which were being interviewed for a second time. In Round One, we interviewed 80 children and young people in four pilot sites (20 in each site). In Round Two, we conducted 97 interviews in five pilot sites (20 in four sites and 17 in another), and 48 interviews in six comparison sites (between seven and nine interviews in each site). Fifty-six children and young people in the pilot sites were tracked through from Round One to Round Two and interviewed twice.

The factors guiding selection of the sample were described in the Introduction to this report. Overall, there were slightly more boys and young men than girls and young women (55% compared to 45%) ranging in age from 7 to 23 years, with younger children particularly concentrated in SWP B and SWP D.

Reflecting the composition of the SWP cohorts (see Appendix 4), 65% of those participating in the first round of interviews were 'looked after' children while 35% were 'care leavers'[6]. By the second round of interviews, this ratio had changed to 50:50, partly due to the age rise of original interviewees, but also because a fifth pilot had joined the evaluation and 75% of that sample were care leavers. Most children and young people (88% pilots; 90% comparisons) had been in care for two or more years, many of these (24% pilots; 28% comparisons) for over five years. The majority were White (84% pilots; 79% comparisons). Five interviewees in SWPs (six in comparison sites) were mixed heritage; five in pilots (two in comparisons) were from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds; and two in SWPs were asylum seekers/refugees. Ethnicity was not specified for eight young people. At least a fifth had special educational needs and/or self-identified health conditions or disabilities. Two young men talked about being fathers, 10 young women were mothers and two mentioned being pregnant.

In reporting children's and young people's views, we draw on the Round Two interviews for most participants. Where children and young people were only interviewed once in Round One, we also draw on data from those interviews where similar questions were asked at both time-points. In places, particularly where we are using responses to closed questions asked consistently across the samples, we 'quantitize' the data using graphical representation or percentages, before fully exploring meaning through qualitative analysis (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie 2003).

[6] We use this term to refer to all the young people interviewed who were aged 16 or over.

4.1 Perceptions of Allocated Workers

4.1.1 Continuity and Transition

SWP children and young people were more likely than similar children and young people in the comparison sites to have had the same allocated worker[7] in the past year. In Round Two, between 75-100% of children and young people interviewed from all pilot sites had the same worker as the previous year in contrast to 25-86% in the different comparison sites.

Where a change of worker occurred in the pilots, it was less likely to be attributed to staff turnover or reorganisation than it was in the comparison sites but was more likely to be described as a consequence of workers being on compassionate leave or off sick. In one comparison site in particular, reorganisation had produced staff changes that impacted on the bonds between children and their workers.

In Chapter 1, we noted that only a minority of children and young people felt that they exercised choice in relation to joining the pilots. Almost all of those who described changes in worker, whether they were from pilot or comparison sites and whether, for SWP children and young people, changes took place when they joined the SWP or later, said they had been given no choice. Some had received little or no warning of changes and one care leaver suggested a more gradual handover would be helpful:

> *'every time my social worker changed I got to meet my social, my new social worker first but I was never given a lot of warning, it was right, your social worker's leaving, you'll be meeting your new one on so and so date, I wasn't given any time or any chance, …. Social workers really need to read up on files before they come round to meet the children…. because you just go round in circles, every time you meet a new social worker you have to sit there, you have to explain everything to them and you tell them that you've been through everything with the old social worker and then obviously they leave and then you get another social worker and you always go through the same thing.'*
>
> (17-19 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

In contrast, in one comparison site, one looked after child described being asked what kind of worker she would like and others in both SWP and comparison sites described good practice in transition from one worker to another.

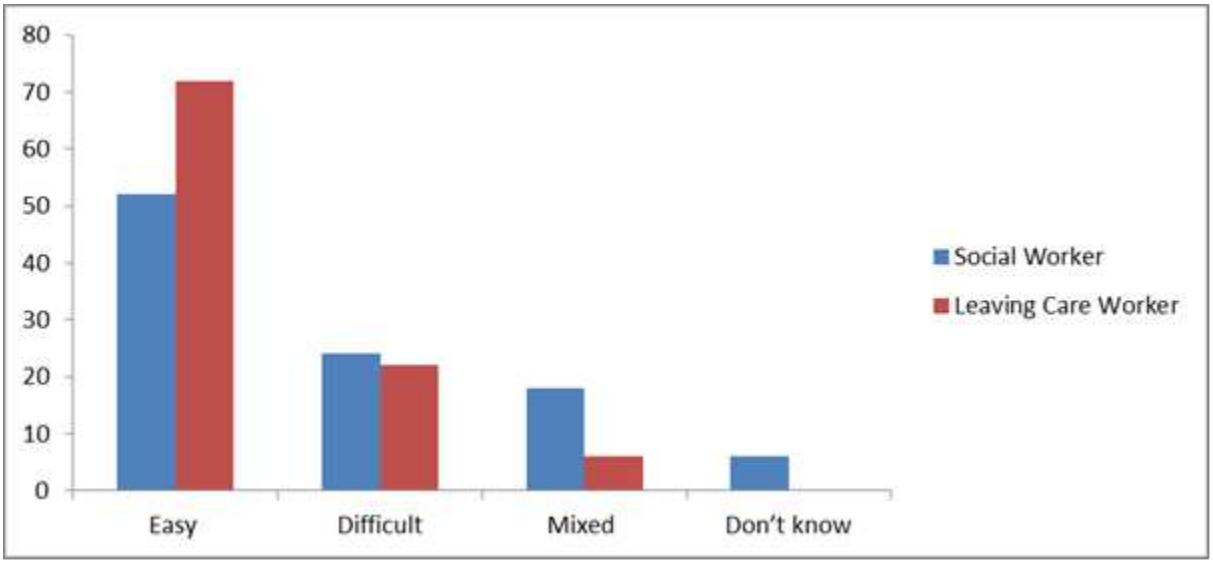
4.1.2 Accessibility and Responsiveness

Children and young people from both SWPs and comparison sites described contacting their worker by telephone (office number or mobile), texts, and occasionally email. A handful of teenagers from SWPs A, C, D and F reported dropping into the SWP offices occasionally to see their worker. Younger children tended to ask their carer to make contact on their behalf.

[7] Allocated workers could be qualified social workers, Personal Advisers/Leaving Care Workers or sometimes, family support/project workers. Children and young people did not always discriminate clearly between them.

Encouragingly, the majority of children and young people in both pilots and comparison sites said it was easy to contact their worker (see Figure 4.1 below).

Figure 4.1 Percentages of children and young people asked in Round Two in both SWPs and comparison sites reporting finding it easy or difficult to contact their allocated worker



The following quotation illustrates the type of positive response given:

> *'if I ever need her for anything, I just walk over [to the offices]. But like if it's the weekend or something I'll text her and she'll just text me back or ring me back or something…never really a problem in getting in touch with her.'*
>
> (16 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

There was higher satisfaction with the responsiveness of Leaving Care Workers or Personal Advisers (PAs), although equal proportions of young people reported difficulties with accessing either social workers or Leaving Care Workers (24% and 22% respectively). A minority of those interviewed had had mixed experiences, particularly in respect of contacting their social worker. As two teenagers commented:

> *'it's the people who are working behind the desk, because you ring them and they say, 'would you like to leave a message?' So you leave a message and then they say, 'oh, somebody will get back to you at the end of the day', and nobody's rang when it's turned four o'clock, so you ring back the next day, 'hello, is [worker] there please?' And she's either out on her lunch or she's either with another person and like even then, 'when she comes back to the office, we'll get her to ring you back', and she never does….'*
>
> (17-19 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

SWP staff were not necessarily more responsive than those from comparison sites. In fact, several children and young people from SWP B were amongst those reporting the least positive experiences.

As shown by Figures 4.2 and 4.3 below, a majority of children and young people participating in Round 2 interviews were satisfied with the frequency with which they saw their allocated worker and an even greater majority were happy with the length of time their workers spent with them.

Figure 4.2 Number of children and young people participating in Round Two interviews (comparison and pilot sites) describing Frequency of Contact with Worker

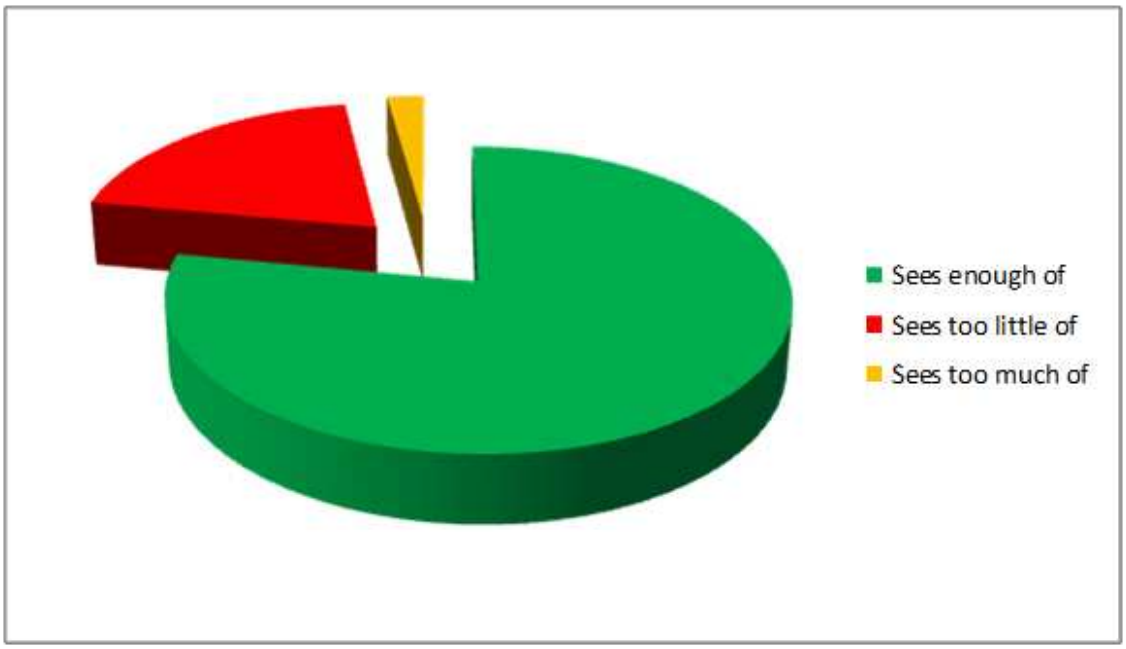
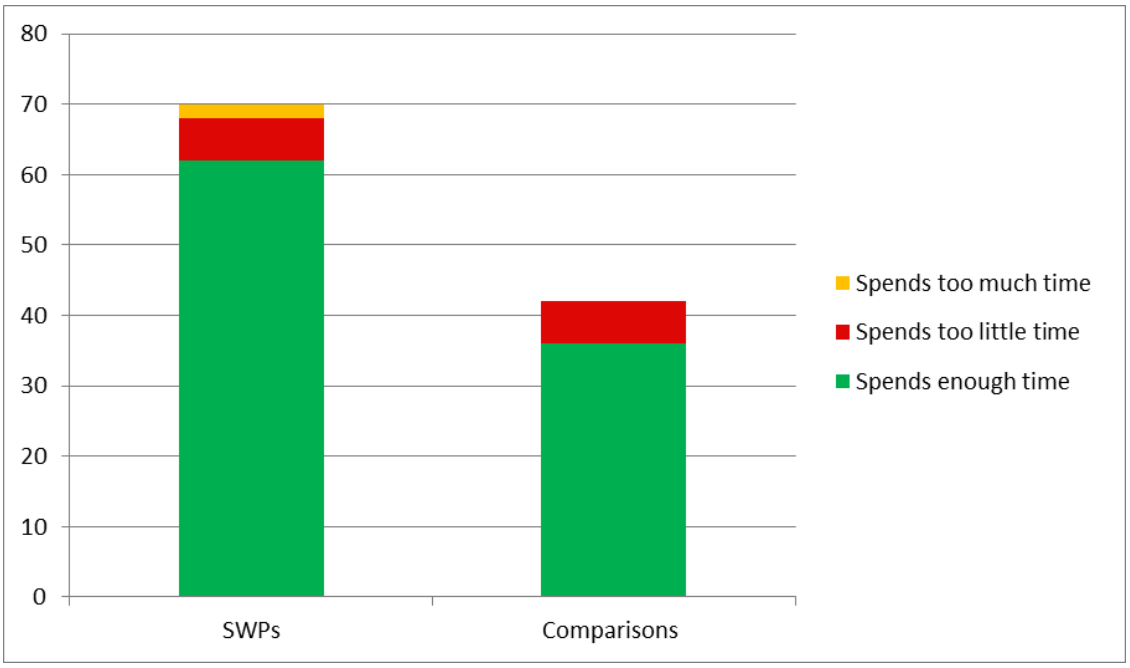


Figure 4.3 Number of children and young people in Round Two interviews describing time worker spent with worker



Children and young people tended to be more satisfied with the amount or frequency of worker contact in SWP F and they were comparatively less satisfied in SWP B.

There was variation in how great a frequency was considered to be sufficient, and this was described as varying according to the timing, their needs and the levels of support they received from other sources such as carers. 'Enough' could vary from weekly to once every six months and the time workers spent with them and was judged sufficient could last as little as five minutes or a whole day.

The few children and young people who were dissatisfied with frequency of contact tended to feel side-lined, noting that when they did see their social worker it was for negative reasons, such as to deal with problem behaviour. Those few who felt they did not see workers enough explained that their worker appeared '*rushed'* or that their own needs felt peripheral, especially when the worker was visiting the young person and the carer at the same time.

Only two young people (both from SWPs) said workers spent too much time with them; this seemed to reflect a poor relationship. Satisfaction with the frequency of contact and amount of time spent was generally related to the quality of the relationship with the worker, their responsiveness to the young person's needs and wishes and the perceived usefulness of the support received.

4.1.3 Out-of-hours and Holidays

Children and young people in pilot and comparison sites did not report making much use of out-of-hours services. Overall, even though children and young people knew of the out-of-hours services run either by Children's Services or the pilot, they only considered using these services in perceived emergencies.

When support was provided out-of-hours, it tended to be described by interviewees as more informal, occurring in the context of relationships with individual workers. Such arrangements were mentioned in SWP C, SWP D and SWP F and three of the comparison sites. Commonly, such contact occurred at challenging periods of time:

> *'I got pregnant again so I had to ring her…I called her out of hours and [to my] amazement she rang me back within the next twenty minutes…'*
>
> (17-19 year old girl, SWP)

When workers were on leave, roughly equal numbers of children and young people in the pilot and comparison sites stated they would either wait for their return or they would ask someone else in the team to help. Invariably, they were dissatisfied with replacement social workers, but less so with replacement Leaving Care Workers. Commonly, when young people were made aware of their worker going on holiday, support was in place from other staff in the team. This was more common in, but not unique to the pilots, and was related to young people's familiarity with the wider team:

> *'Because all the members, all the members of [SWP] know me and like I know them and sometimes they know my case files because they share children, all I have to do is ring.'*
>
> (14-16 year old, looked after boy, SWP)

'If something like that did happen I'd probably just ask for one of the others, probably [worker] or [worker], actually any of them, I know most of them now.'

(17 year old, female care leaver, Comparison Site)

Young people were more likely to contact the office when their PA/Leaving Care Worker was on holiday than if their social worker was on holiday; they often preferred to wait for the return of the familiar worker who knew their situation. Some young people felt able to contact their social worker while on holiday if the matter was urgent and this had been pre-agreed.

4.1.4 Quality of Relationship

The majority (between 75 and 100%, depending on site) of all children and young people participating in Round Two interviews, in both comparison and pilot sites, thought their allocated workers listened to them and cared about them. In SWP C and SWP F, only one young person in each site felt not cared about or not listened to. Whereas in each of the other three SWPs (SWP A, SWP B and SWP C), this figure was three or more.

Workers were described as spending time listening to and understanding children's and young people's perspectives, and those of their families. In response, children and young people felt cared about:

'…she's been out looking for me at like God knows what time in the morning, you know, trying to look for me, so she, she's not like other social workers who just like, they don't… really care.'

(17 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Positive listening involved paying attention, being prepared to hear difficult things and validating the child or young person's feelings:

'…he listens to what I say and doesn't like ignore what I'm saying and just wait until he's finished. He stops what he's saying and listens to what I have to [say], like if I had a problem and he was talking about something else he, he'd stop and then he'd listen to what I was saying and so he, he obviously cares, he listens.'

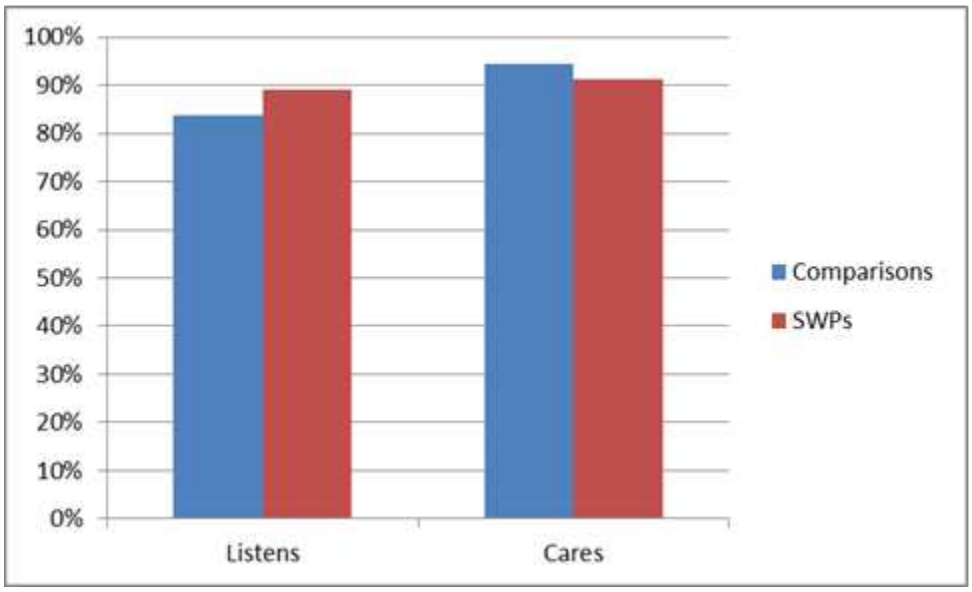
(10 year old, looked after boy, SWP)

'she'll sit there and listen to my hours, hour long ramblings of Paul Wesley and Vampire Diaries and Glee and everything else I talk about…even if she doesn't watch them and she sits there and listens and if I have anything to say she'll sit there and listen'.

(17 year old, female care leaver, comparison site)

Figure 4.4 shows that children and young people in comparison sites said slightly more frequently that their workers cared about them; whereas in SWPs they said slightly more frequently that workers listened to them.

Figure 4.4 Percentage of children and young people in Round 2 interviews describing quality of relationship with allocated worker



Those nine children and young people who did not feel cared about (this group was evenly distributed across SWP and comparison sites) said that they did not like a worker's personality, they thought that workers were there *'just because they were getting paid'* or, that they did not spend the time or effort providing them with the kind of support they needed. Four also talked about a lack of communication, for example:

> *'…the way she just hasn't contacted me. I mean if this was me and I was in her situation, I'd be phoning myself all the time to let me know [what was going on with my family].'*
>
> (18 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

Fifteen children and young people felt their workers were not listening, didn't pay attention or didn't spend long enough with them:

> *'…he sort of listens to it but then five minutes later goes out the other ear, if you know what I mean, goes in one ear, five minutes later when he's drove off, goes out the other ear'.*
>
> (15 year old, looked after boy, Comparison Site)

The majority of children and young people who expressed an opinion preferred their current worker to their previous worker. This tended to be because current workers were perceived as listening more, doing more or having better personalities:

> *'I don't how to describe it, we're not mates, I know we're not mates because she's got to be professional. But, but at the same time like, I know I can talk to her about anything… she's always willing to listen, and at the same time she gets in touch with me, like, do you know what I mean? Like, with other*

Social Workers like, I've waited like different, like six months, seven months before.'

(16 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Some young people also preferred their current worker because they were part of a new Leaving Care service rather than being a social worker.

Only 10% of children and young people in pilot sites contrasted their current worker unfavourably with previous workers; this compared with 30% who did so in comparison sites. In SWP A and SWP D (and one comparison site), all the young people who expressed an opinion preferred their current workers. Whereas in SWP B (and three comparison sites), nearly as many children and young people preferred their past worker to their current worker.

This may be explained by the fact that children's and young people's evaluations of the quality of their relationships with staff seemed to improve with the length of time they had known their worker; the comparison site where the most young people said they preferred previous workers was the place where there had been most recent change. This confirms the significance of maintaining quality relationships over time.

4.2 Knowing the Offices and Other Staff

Children and young people's perspectives on the accessibility of SWP and social service premises were multi-dimensional. They highlighted factors such as location (i.e. proximity to the town or city centre, in a familiar area or not); young person friendliness (e.g. modern decoration and furnishings, layout, informal atmosphere); and facilities or resources on offer (e.g. computers, pool table, range of rooms). Generally, SWP children and young people (especially those in pilots that had designed their offices to be child-friendly) were more likely to be positive about the offices than the children and young people in comparison sites, often using phrases such as *'child-friendly'* to describe the premises.

'I just chill there and watch telly and like there's all these kids like, well not kids, like my age, playing pool ….I just sit there watching telly.'

(14-16 year old, looked after girl, SWP)

During the young people's advisory group in March 2012, young people from one pilot in particular talked about taking ownership of a space within the SWP building, through the graffiti activities organised for the young people's participation group. One young person from another pilot described choosing furniture for the young people's room. In these two SWPs, young people also influenced what resources were available, such as games, pool table and a drinks machine.

However, opinions on premises varied in both comparison and some SWP sites. In three SWPs, children and young people were largely positive about the offices, although in one of these not many knew the SWP building. In one pilot site, the location of the SWP was particularly problematic:

'I think it's just, well, too far, when it was in the town centre it was easier to get to.'

(17-19 year old boy, care leaver, SWP)

Even in one of the SWP sites with popular premises, some young people had reservations saying they were just *'social workers' offices'* or that they were not allowed in parts of the building since access in some areas was controlled to protect equipment such as computers

and files. Whilst judged an improvement on the previous social services location, the offices of another SWP were described by young people as small and plain, and *'could be a bit more homely'*.

The vast majority of young people in both pilot and comparison sites said that the other workers they encountered in the organisation's offices were friendly and welcoming. The proportion of staff being perceived as friendly in SWPs varied, however, from three-quarters to all. In both comparison sites and SWPs, some young people talked about being offered something to drink or eat. In one SWP this appeared to be personalised, as one young person knew her favourite crisps would always be available and where to find them. Occasionally, staff behaviour was more than unfriendly – it was perceived as rude.

Being recognised and known within an organisation was important for young people's sense of identity and self-esteem. In both pilot and comparison sites, some young people talked about feeling known by staff, but this was more common in SWPs. In all the SWPs, at least some young people talked about feeling they knew and could talk to managers, who would help them sort out any problems, and to receptionists who would connect them to their workers. For some, being 'known' was a significant contrast with their experience of other services:

> *'I got to speak to [the manager, who] explained it to me and went through it with me, so, they're all, they're all nice there, unlike Social Services, [name of building], I'll ring them up and they're like 'Can I ask who's speaking please?'. I'll go '[Young person's Name]', they'll go '[young person's surname]?' I'll go 'Yeah', and they'll go 'Right hold the line'. They put it down a minute and then they'll go 'No she's not in, sorry bye'. Like with [social work practice] they're like 'Hiya [young person's name], you alright?'. Do you know like, right cheery and nice.'*
>
> (18 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

4.3 Safety and Support

We asked all children and young people what they understood by 'feeling safe' and whether they felt safe. The majority (80%) of all children and young people interviewed in Round Two felt safe. They defined safety using a variety of criteria, which differed according to age and the context they described. Being 'safe' also involved having self-confidence, not self-harming and having safe sex:

> *'Feeling safe to me is having a roof over my head and someone to keep me out of trouble and if I get into any trouble they come in and help me out.'*
>
> (18 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Around one in five of the children and young people interviewed in Round Two felt unsafe. This included a marginally higher proportion of care leavers than looked after children. Due to the variety of definitions of safety and reasons for lack of safety, it is not possible to reliably compare and contrast these perspectives within the confines of this report.

Children and young people could be helped to feel safe by finding a safe place to live, or to go out, or by having someone they could talk to and who would help, if needed. Around a quarter of those interviewed named workers as people who helped them with worries and to feel safe:

'[Worker] says if there's anything you, if you want to ask me that you don't like and you're frightened about then just tell me, so that's pretty much staying safe and personal problems.'

(10 year old looked after boy, SWP)

'sometimes, if I can't talk to my counsellor I'll try and ring [PA] up and talk to her because I have been suicidal quite a number of times'

(17 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

Many children and young people related safety to where they lived, their emotional wellbeing and the availability of other support. Workers could therefore contribute to children's and young people's sense of safety by ensuring appropriate placements and accommodation; family contact; mental health interventions and access to a support network.

Five of the tracked young people had experienced changes in their levels of safety between Round One and Round Two. Two young people felt marginally safer, for one, this was because her brother was around to protect her; for the other, it was because she now had a place of her own, but generally feeling unsafe was still an issue for her. Three young people felt less safe in Round Two. One had had a recent accident and one had had a child removed from her care. The third was worried her support would soon end, as described below:

'[Being safe means] having a home, I always feel on edge that [SWP] are going to chuck me out at some point. … If you're under, under eighteen, they help you find accommodation. So, but if you're over eighteen they'll write you off their books.'

(19 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

Although not everyone felt safe, all the children and young people talked about support networks. Most frequently, those named as providing support were carers and staff associated with placements (e.g. foster carers/independent lodging providers and residential unit/supported housing staff). This is consistent with Holland's (2010) finding that the most salient relationships for looked after young people were the everyday relationships with carers, birth family and extended family members, friends, partners and pets. Children and young people in our study also mentioned being supported by allocated workers, birth family members, education workers (usually named teachers) and friends, partners and partners' families. Some mentioned support from specialist support services, IROs, an Independent Visitor, an employer and an advocate.

Allocated workers supported the vast majority of children and young people in a wide range of ways: listening to them and speaking on their behalf; helping them have contact with members of their family; providing emotional support; keeping them out of trouble and staying safe; support with education, training or employment; practical help with applications and accessing grants; support to take part in recreational activities, and many other things. Workers also made referrals to other services such as counselling and mental health services. Some interviewees mentioned support provided to their birth parents as well as to themselves.

Children and young people under 16 talked most about help with family contact, placements and education. Support for placement and education, training and employment remained significant for care leavers, but many more of them also mentioned help with financial and practical matters. This largely related to aspects of leaving care: budgeting, benefits, crisis payments of bills, passports, national insurance numbers. The help support workers gave towards achieving care leavers' independence also related to accommodation, including finding appropriate housing, support and furnishings:

> *'When I was failing Uni I saw her quite a few times… And she brought someone along to help us out and write my CV for the next year and stuff like that … and she was like, she was brilliant then, so I had like help. And she takes us out for like coffees like even, and she buys me food and she makes sure that I've registered to a doctor and dentist and all this.'*
>
> (21 year old, male care leaver, Comparison Site)

Some young people from both pilot and comparison sites described receiving continuity of support beyond the age of 21 years.

Although many workers helped with practicalities, some young people described the extra thought and effort that was put into this by some workers:

> *'I was only meant to get like, what were it? Sixty, seventy quid for a settee, she ended up getting me £120 and she'll always try and get that bit more if I need it for something, or if I ask for it, she always does.'*
>
> (17-19 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Similar examples of workers who were seen to go to extra trouble and put themselves out were found in the comparison sites:

> *'Well I went away …when I got my flat and by the time I'd come back for three days, my flat was fully decorated and carpeted and everything and she wasn't even at work, so like she's, she just, she goes out of her way like for people'.*
>
> (17-19 year old, male care leaver, comparison site)

Whilst all the young people said they had some support, around a quarter of young people participating in both Rounds One and Two described lacking some support in key areas, such as contact, emotional support, help with education and employment and preparation for leaving care.

Some SWPs had strong links with Connexions and young people perceived them to be part of the SWP service, helping plan an educational or employment pathway:

> *'Connexions worker she helped me, she put me on this course. It was during the summer just before I started the college course in September, and I worked hard and I got a qualification out of it.'*
>
> (17-19 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

However, in other places, these links were absent. For some young people there were concerns about the lack of procedures in place to move care leavers toward independent living:

> *'…nothing's been done like they should have… my Pathway Plan has only been done today. Today and I'm 18 in six months. . . should have been done when I'm 16.'*
>
> (17 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

There was no difference between pilot and comparison sites in the proportions of children and young people who described themselves as lacking support.

All SWPs showed progress over time for one or two interviewees, as some of the tracked children and young people said more of their needs were now met. For example, one looked after child in her first interview asked for more help to go out and do activities. In the second interview, she reported that now, in addition to her social worker, she had a support worker who took her out to the cinema. However, the total number of young people lacking support only fell marginally.

Where children and young people remained dissatisfied, sometimes it was because one issue had been sorted out but another one was outstanding. For example, problems with contact may have been resolved but the social worker was still not helping with practical arrangements for leaving care. In other cases, young people felt nothing had been done:

> *'They've done nothing that I wanted, I can't actually name one thing that they've done, none of it, you know, they said we're going to do this, this and this, and then said no, we're not….Travel expenses to school, … paying for transport to see my brother, I don't really ask of much for them really but when I do it is quite big things I ask them.'*
>
> (18 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

In some cases, where support was absent across the two years studied, young people had stopped expecting support.

4.4 Contact with Family

In common with the findings of Dickson et al's (2009) review, contact with birth families emerged as a major preoccupation: this was the type of support most frequently described by looked after children and it remained important for care leavers. Workers were involved in organising contact and transport to contact, trying to extend contact according to children's wishes and supporting children to come to terms with those times when contact did not occur.

The nature and extent of family contact for both children and older teenagers varied considerably and was largely dependent upon individual circumstances. Two-thirds of children and young people interviewed said that they had the 'right amount' of family contact and that they were happy with current arrangements:

> *'…we chose what we wanted to do and when we wanted contact and they all said it was our choice, and then they gave us some money and stuff so we could like do activities or whatever and then with my sisters as well … they arranged like transport.'*
>
> (18 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Looking across all the interviews, around a third of those commenting on family contact said they wanted more contact with some family members, while acknowledging this might be difficult. This included proportionately more children under 16. Some of those who were not happy had tried to increase family contact by asking their social worker or raising it at their review but increased contact had either not materialised or they were told it would be inappropriate. In these cases emotional support from staff was crucial:

> *'he's helped us with trying not to make us upset because we're seeing Mummy less'.*
>
> (8 year old, looked after girl, Comparison Site)

In some situations, children and young people wanted contact but they felt they had no one to talk to about this. When contact was deemed appropriate and had been agreed, there were also practical problems that were sometimes not addressed. These included the provision or payment of transport and the availability of workers to facilitate contact. There were occasional reports of a lack of intervention in such problems by allocated workers. This contrasts starkly with other examples of speedy good practice. In this example, speed of response is married with support for the child both in making the decision and carrying it through:

> *'I phoned [social worker] or text her. And said that I want to see my mum, … and then she came out the next day and they were talking to me about it, like thinking why I want to see her and stuff … So then I told her why and then she made the arrangements … and then I was quite nervous and like thinking God I'm going to see my mum … she, [social worker] sat in the room with me, because I felt like dead uncomfortable at first. And then for the second [contact] she wasn't there with me because I felt like alright'.*
>
> (17 year old, female care leaver, SWP)

In Round Two, slightly more children and young people in SWPs appeared to be satisfied with arrangements for contact than in comparison sites. Satisfaction was more widespread in some sites than in others. Evidently, there are some requests for contact which cannot be met and in a number of cases, the timescales social workers proposed for addressing such requests were longer than young people found acceptable. Looking at the 28 children and young people who were not happy with contact, however, 13 indicated a lack of intervention by their workers. These 13 children and young people said either that they had never been asked their wishes about contact; that workers were meant to be supporting contact but still no arrangements had been made; or that reviewing officers had told workers to put better contact in place and there had been no change. Proportionately twice as many (7/39) of these 13 young people were from comparison sites as from SWPs (6/74).

Most SWPs showed some progress over time towards improving contact. In Round One interviews, 14 of the tracked children and young people were unhappy with contact arrangements. In Round Two, nine of these felt that these problems had been resolved, for example by making contact unsupervised:

> *'[SWP Worker] managed to make it unsupervised, so she's the only one that managed to sort that out.'*
>
> (14-16 year old, looked after boy, SWP)

For three young people there had been no change. One said more contact had been agreed in his review, two months previously, but '*nothing had come of it'*. One said she wanted to see her parents more but she had not talked to her social worker about it because she never saw him. The third said he wanted more contact but it had still not been discussed at his review. In addition, two young people who had previously been happy with their levels of contact now wanted more and felt they were not getting help with this. Most of the tracked children and young people who were dissatisfied with contact, together with the two who were no longer happy, were from SWP B.

4.5 Placements and Accommodation

Support with placements and accommodation was the primary area of support from workers discussed by care leavers, and was also important for younger children. The largest proportion of the sample in Round Two was living in foster care (46%), with another fifth (21%) in independent houses or flats, a tenth in supported lodgings and others were living with kin carers, friends or parents or were in residential units.

Analysis of the SSDA data for 2011 (see Appendix 4) showed that the SWPs B, C and D (but not SWPs A and F) succeeded in reducing the level of placement change experienced by children and young people. Their performance in this respect compared favourably to that of the host local authorities and comparison sites. In contrast, the interview data (which reflected the experiences of a sample of children and young people rather than the experiences of all those cared for by SWPs) did not show a relationship between placement change and site. The interviews found that whether or not a child or young person had experienced stability in their placement over the past year was strongly linked to their age: more changes were reported by teenagers and older young people and this association between placement change and age was confirmed by the SSDA data which estimated a 2% increase in placement changes for every year of age. Suitability of placement was also identified as a factor contributing to placement change and a placement's suitability could be affected by, for instance, a young person becoming pregnant, the mental state of the young person, the onset of adolescence and challenging behaviours, changes in the circumstances of carers, relationship breakdown of different kinds and other types of change. Some changes of placement had come about because the young person had moved onto university or college and these could be described as positive changes. Other changes had happened as a result of difficulties or breakdowns in relationships with carers, particularly as young people matured. Also, as age or circumstances changed, so too did eligibility to remain in accommodation designated for specific age groups or needs, such as, for example, supported lodgings for young people up to 18 years, or placements with foster carers who specialised in working with particular age groups only.

The interview data showed most change for young people in the three SWPs with higher numbers of care leavers. In one of these, SWP C, nearly all those interviewed in Round Two had changed placement in the past year.

The frequency of placement changes is, on its own, a rather crude measure of children's well-being. It is perhaps more useful to consider the degree of choice children and young people were able to exercise in relation to placement change. In Round Two interviews, around half of the 68 children and young people who had moved in the previous two years, said they chose their placement or accommodation. In two cases, moves had been initiated by a child or young person's request for very specific types of accommodation.

> *'She was a good Social Worker and I mentioned to her about living on a farm and she did the best that she could get me living on a farm and I came here.'*
>
> (13 year old, looked after boy, Comparison Site)

Around one quarter of those 68 who had recently moved described having an element of influence over where they lived. Either there was no choice about moving but choice about where they went; or choice to move but no choice about where they moved to. Just less than a quarter were informed, but moved with no influence over where they were placed or their accommodation. This was usually because of moves required because of behaviour or age:

> *'I was just told I was moving here and then they just moved me here….I think I saw it first but I had no choice'.*
> *Interviewer: 'They didn't say would you like to come?'*
> *'Yeah, it was, 'you can go and see it but you're going there' kind of thing'.*
> (14 year old, looked after girl, Comparison Site)

Looked after children were three times more likely than care leavers to be moved without exerting any influence over where they went. Three-quarters of those who experienced some choice were care leavers. SWPs as a group did not offer children and young people more choice regarding placements than was experienced by those in comparison sites.

In both rounds of interviews, in pilot and comparison sites, the vast majority of respondents were happy, had no reservations about their placements and had good relationships with their carers; slightly fewer care leavers than younger children, around three-quarters, felt happy with their accommodation. However, most children and young people described being listened to, supported and feeling cared about in their placement:

> *'They [foster carers] look after me and if owt goes wrong they always see if I'm okay and that.'*
> (11 year old, looked after boy, Comparison Site)

In common with the findings of Skuse and Ward's (2003) study, being made to feel they fitted into a family was cited as important:

> *'I'm very lucky to live here because they've [carers] helped me in every way, shape or form and their family, you know, their side of family has always treated me like one of their own.'*
> (17 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

When small disagreements arose, the vast majority of children and young people described being able to talk to their carers and sort out their differences. Social workers in both pilot and comparison sites also assisted in resolving any issues that arose:

> *'I talked to [worker] about it and they advised me to just sit down and talk to [carers] about it, but they'd be there if I needed them to be. And I just talked to my foster carers about it and we just …sorted everything out really and talked about what was wrong and that and now we're perfectly fine.'*
> (16 year old, female care leaver, Comparison Site)

Some children remained unhappy with their placements. This could be because of recent moves, restrictions imposed by carers, problems with neighbours and loneliness when moving into independent accommodation. One young mother was living in a flat that was unsuitable for a baby; two others were homeless (although staying temporarily with a family member) and had difficulties securing a tenancy agreement, and another was unemployed and finding it difficult to pay the rent at her lodgings.

There was no substantial difference in satisfaction with placement between SWPs and comparison sites, although the site where young people were least happy with accommodation was SWP A. SWPs showed progress over time; in Round Two, the number of young people dissatisfied with their placement had decreased slightly. All eight of the pilot young people who were dissatisfied with their accommodation at the first interview were more satisfied at follow-up. When asked what was good with the new placement, one young person simply said:

'I don't even know, like it's just everything'

(17-19 year old, male care leaver, SWP)

Others spoke of having a better relationship with new lodgings providers, no longer being homeless, moving into a house where her baby had a separate room, better relationships with existing carers and movement to a kin carer who was proceeding to special guardianship.

4.6 Speed of Decision Making

The interviews measured children and young people's perceptions about the nature and speed of decision making by social workers in SWPs and comparison sites in a limited way. While these results are not conclusive, the bulk of references made to instant or quicker decision making came from children and young people from the SWPs, with only a few from the comparison sites. However, there were also slightly more comments about delays in decision making from pilot children and young people than from comparison sites. Delays were highlighted in relation to issues about family contact, applying for specific training courses and accessing personal records.

Depending on the type of decision to be made, there was some indication that straightforward questions about financial support that were within the control of the SWP were responded to more quickly than in the past:

'Most of the time it's a straight answer but if it's something more like detailed like I need this, this and this, he'll have to 'Oh, just let me speak, … it's always ring you back in about 10 minutes. So pretty much straight away...'

(17-19 year old boy, care leaver, SWP)

However, there were other types of decisions that had reportedly taken a long time even in the SWPs, or the Worker was said to have forgotten to follow up paperwork and had had to be reminded:

'She wouldn't always be able to give me a straight answer, she'd have to go and ask first but it would be a while before I got an answer back…'

(17-19 year old girl, care leaver, SWP)

A child from SWP B felt that decision making had improved at the start of the SWP but had since deteriorated:

'The laptop that was okayed quickly, something like a week but it just took a long time to get money. But they were a lot better when we first started with them and I feel they're slacking a lot more.'

(17-19 year old girl, care leaver, SWP)

4.7 Overview of Children's and Young People's Views and Experiences

In all sites, there were some examples of good practice and some negative comments, illustrating both the diversity of children's needs and circumstances as well as variations between workers. Overall, the vast majority of children and young people were satisfied. There were slight differences between pilot sites and comparison sites. Notably, this was in relation to family contact where children and young people in the SWPs appeared more likely to be satisfied than those in comparison sites. Pilot children and young people were also more likely to have experienced continuity of allocated worker in the last year. There were also differences found within the group of SWPs and within the group of comparison sites and these were sometimes as great as those found between the pilots and comparison sites.

Chapter 4 Summary Points

- Pilot children were more likely to have experienced continuity of worker in the last year. In Chapter 2, we reported low staff turnover figures for three of the pilots but higher levels of change in the two other SWPs.

- The pilots as a group succeeded in reducing the rate of placement change for children and young people, although SWP F was an exception in this respect. Interviews with children and young people suggested that age and placement suitability were factors contributing to placement change. Care leavers were more likely to experience placement change but also more likely to be offered choices in respect of placement change. Choices regarding placements were available to the same extent in pilot and comparison sites.

- Most children and young people in both pilot and comparison sites reported being happy in their placements. Care leavers were slightly more likely to be dissatisfied. SWPs showed some progress in increasing satisfaction with placements; the number of young people dissatisfied with their placement had decreased slightly at follow-up. However, the site where children and young people were most likely to be dissatisfied with their placement was an SWP.

- Children's and young people's reports showed no differences between pilots and comparison sites in terms of allocated workers' accessibility and responsiveness. Most found it easy to contact their worker, although there were some differences between pilots in this respect. Most were satisfied with the frequency and amount of time their allocated worker saw them; again there were differences found between pilots. Children and young people made limited use of out-of-hours services and, when they did, this usually took the form of informal contact with their individual worker.

- Most children and young people in both pilot and comparison sites considered that their allocated worker listened to them and cared about them; there were no substantial differences between pilot and comparison sites in this respect.

- Children and young people received a range of types of support from allocated workers; support with contact, placements and education was important to younger children; care leavers were more concerned with accommodation and other issues relating to independent living. There was no difference between pilot and comparison sites regarding the proportions of children and young people who felt they lacked support. In some instances, staff in both pilot and comparison sites were described as '*going the extra mile*' in the provision of support.

- The findings with regard to speed of decision making were not conclusive. While most references to instant or quicker decision making came from SWP children and young people, there were also slightly more comments about delays in decision making from pilot children and young people than from those in comparison sites

- In line with other research, contact with birth families emerged as a key preoccupation for children and young people. Slightly more children and young people in SWPs appeared to be satisfied with arrangements for contact than in comparison sites, but levels of satisfaction varied considerably between pilots.

Chapter 5 - Parents' Perceptions and Experiences

5.1 Parent Characteristics

The 19 parents interviewed (5 from SWP F, 4 from SWPs B and D and 3 from SWPs A and C) all had children who were currently looked after by the SWPs. They included 14 mothers, four fathers and one grandmother (all referred to as 'parents' in this report); all described themselves as White British. Their ages ranged from 23 to 65 with eight aged between 36 and 45. Seven could be described as having a long-term illness or disability and, in most cases, this was a mental health problem. Most of the group (16) had three or more children, but only six parents currently had all their children in the looked after system, as most either had some of their children at home with them, or some of their children were adults and had left care. Their children who were cared for by the pilots were aged between eight and 20 years. This group of parents had considerable experience of the looked after system: half (10) the group had had the child/children currently looked after by the SWP in care for more than five years; only one parent had had their child in care for less than a year. Most of their children who were in the care of the pilots were placed in foster care, although three were in secure or residential settings and three young people were living independently; one parent had her child back at home. Six parents described their child as having a long-term illness or disability.

Parents who talked about why their children had come into care described the events in various ways; some circumstances were complex. Three parents explained that their own mental health or substance misuse problems had contributed to their children being looked after; four had found that they were unable to control their children's behaviour which in some cases was attributed to special needs. Two parents acknowledged that their children had experienced abuse in the past. Four parents felt that professional mistakes had contributed to their children being looked after and one was anticipating that her child would be returning to her care. However, most of the parents interviewed did not challenge the need for their child/children to be looked after and appeared reconciled to their children's current status. This might relate to the fact that, for most parents, their children had been looked after for a considerable period of time.

5.2 Information about the Pilot

Half the parents interviewed had been given information about the SWP, either verbally or in the form of leaflets. Parents interviewed from SWP D and SWP F were most likely to have been informed, although in most cases the information appeared quite limited:

> *'…I've been given…complaints procedures and all things like that.'*
>
> *'Interviewer: Anything that tells you how the organisation is supposed to work and who runs it and how they run it?'*
>
> *'No, no (laughs)'.*
>
> (Parent)

Most parents from the other three SWPs had not been given information about the SWP and a third of those interviewed (seven) had not realised that the SWP was a different organisation from social services.

Feelings about the change of social worker occasioned by the move to the SWP were mixed. As noted in Chapter 1, no-one had exercised any choice in the matter and some had been 'confused' or felt sad at losing the relationship they had forged with the previous social worker who they had thought was good. One was unhappy with the shift from previously being supported through complex court proceedings by a qualified social worker prior to being allocated an SWP support worker. However, for others, the change had proved very positive.

5.3 Continuity and transition

Six of the parents interviewed talked about changes of allocated worker whilst they were with the SWP. In two pilots (SWP D and SWP F), parents had experienced just one change of worker. However, three parents (from SWPs B, D and F), had experienced between two and four changes of worker whilst with the pilot. One parent had experienced a change of worker in response to a complaint she had made about the allocated worker. For another, a change was positive as it was a response to her not establishing a good relationship with one social worker:

> *'it was good to actually sit and tell my side of the story and I felt very comfortable doing that with her, she was just very nice'*
>
> (Parent)

This parent described the changes as entirely negative and repeating their experiences of change across a longer period of time with social services:

> *'My kids have had ten Social Workers with the [local authority] and they've had four in 18 months from [the SWP]'*
>
> (Parent)

Some parents also discussed the changes that would occur when the SWP's contract ended in 2012; these changes had been discussed with their pilot worker and feelings were mixed about this. One parent was reassured that her social worker would move back to social services with her; however two parents were angry about further changes:

> *'…what's the point of trying something and it works and then stopping it? … It's just saying 'He, he, look what you could have, but we're not going to do that.' [laughs]*
>
> (Parent)

5.4 Perceptions of Allocated Workers

5.4.1 Accessibility and Responsiveness

All the parents described the accessibility and responsiveness of allocated workers and half were satisfied with these aspects while the other half had either mixed experiences of different members of staff or consistently negative experiences. Where parents or children were disabled, slightly more than half the parents felt they did not see enough of their allocated workers.

Nine parents said they had enough contact with the allocated worker and most of these described these workers as easy to get hold of. Responsiveness was evident in comments like this one:

> *'If I rung on the evening time, she'd [social worker] get back the next day. The next day is not like days waiting. I haven't got to call to jog their memories if I want to speak to them, or nothing.'*
>
> (Parent)

Some workers were also accessible in the evenings and at weekends, phoning parents themselves or making it clear that they were available by phone out-of-hours:

> *'….it must have been about half past six that he phoned me when he was on his way driving back … he wanted to phone me straightaway. He was really pleased that [my child] has asked to see me …he didn't have to do that, it's his time, he was on his way home, he could have waited until the following morning but he phoned me straightaway.'*
>
> (Parent)

Six parents said they did not have enough contact with the SWP worker allocated to them and their children and found that workers were not easy to get hold of. Interestingly, this parent's social worker was employed by the same pilot as the social worker described immediately above, emphasising the variability between different staff within one pilot:

> *'…I've rang her up and made untold appointments, send her text after text after text and she never ever contacts me back'*
>
> (Parent)

There was no noticeable difference between the accessibility and responsiveness of social workers and that of PAs and support workers, but some parents drew contrasts between different workers.

Seven parents identified a marked improvement in the accessibility and responsiveness of staff once their children joined the pilot. One parent talked about her SWP worker being more available:

> *'It's more hands on, people see what's going [on] …you get to them more. You see more of them …I've had plenty of times where I've not been able to get hold of anyone in Social Services.'*
>
> (Parent)

Two parents, however, found SWP staff less accessible than local authority social workers. Among those parents who suggested ways in which the pilots might improve their work, four (three from SWP B) identified the need for more regular on-going social work contact with parents and for the staff to be more accessible:

> *'Just no communication…Just not being able to get hold of anybody, just not getting any answers. It's so frustrating, well you just don't get no answers, you don't get no help….I think they should have more contact with the parents.'*
>
> (Parent)

There were marked differences between the pilots with regard to parents' perception of staff accessibility and responsiveness. All parents from SWP D (where the pilot had an explicit policy of developing positive relationships with birth parents) made positive comments about the accessibility and responsiveness of some/all workers. In SWP B, SWP C and SWP F there was

a more mixed picture concerning accessibility and responsiveness. In SWP B, the majority of comments indicated that parents did not receive an accessible and responsive service. One parent, who was extremely disappointed with the poor information flow from this pilot, cited a number of instances when she had not been informed adequately about events in her child's life; she felt that, while the local authority acknowledged a duty to keep her informed, the pilot staff *'won't volunteer nothing'*.

5.4.2 Quality of Relationships

All parents interviewed described the quality of relationships that they had with allocated social workers, PAs and workers who were involved with supporting contact arrangements. A common theme was that parents valued workers who treated them and their views with respect:

> *'I want to be treated like a human being, I don't want to be treated like - can I say it - a dog.'*
>
> (Parent)

Most parents made some positive comments about some of their workers. Half made some negative comments and most of these also had some good as well as bad things to say about the quality of the understanding shown towards them and their children. Thus, two parents had only negative comments and nine had only positive things to say. This mixed response reflects the different ways parents responded to different aspects of practitioners' understanding on which they were asked to comment. Parents with disabled children were more likely to voice mixed feelings about whether workers understood them and their children.

A positive response emerged in regard to allocated workers' understanding of parents' relationships with their children: two-thirds said allocated workers understood their relationship with their children; only one felt categorically that the worker did not understand their relationship. Half of the parents felt their workers had a good understanding of what was best for children. Balancing the child's needs with recognition of the parent's role and feelings was important here:

> *'Definitely, yeah, yeah [worker understands what's best for child]. But as well, she does get me involved a lot, especially when it comes to like family…so [a relative] wanted to see them and straightaway she was like well what do you feel about it?'*
>
> (Parent)

However, less than half of those who answered the question said that allocated workers understood them or what was best for them, while more than half were equally split between negative and mixed responses. Some of these negative responses were related to failures to acknowledge the parent's perspective:

> *'they think that we're all made of steel and we've got no feelings... and then when you get upsets, they're like "What are you getting upset about?"'*
>
> (Parent)

Two-thirds of parents felt respected by their workers and treated as parents by them. Where this was not the case, parents were especially critical of staff who *'talked down'* to them:

> *'They make you feel like you're second class citizens and you shouldn't have a say.'*
>
> (Parent)

Over three-quarters of parents liked their workers and three-quarters of parents also felt listened to:

> *'And she will listen to me and if I ask ... if I've got something to … I'll ask her about, she'll either say yes or no to and it will be a straight … she'll also give me the reason why as well.'*
>
> (Parent)

Parents in SWP A and SWP D were more consistently positive about the allocated worker's understanding and attitudes than those in SWP B and SWP C. SWP F was at the mid-point in this range of views. Three of the four parents in SWP B were consistently dissatisfied with every aspect of how they were treated.

5.5 SWP Offices and Other Staff

Eleven parents said they knew other staff in the SWPs and half of them described other SWP staff being accessible and responsive. The accessibility of pilot staff was valued and parents noted that they could expect all staff in the pilot to know them and be available to them:

> *'…even the receptionist lady, I can phone her up and she knows who I am, I can speak to her about anything.'*
>
> (Parent)

One parent appreciated the respect and warmth accorded him by other staff:

> *'You know what it's like, they, they are, they're, err, professional people, but they're all, treat you as human like they are, make you a brew, a conversation.'*
>
> (Parent)

Another parent described the pilot's own duty system as accessible:

> *'Say we can't get hold of [PA] there's always somebody else here that I have to speak to whoever it may be, like duty or whoever, at night they've got a 24 hour number …somebody's always on.'*
>
> (Parent)

However, a few parents described difficulties with other staff saying they failed to pass on messages.

For some parents, the physical location and design of the SWP offices also contributed to a positive experience of an accessible and responsive service. Among those parents who knew the SWP offices, a majority expressed positive opinions and a few parents compared the pilot offices favourably to those of Children's Services:

'It's not as daunting as when I go up to see the other one's Social Worker…because obviously in the [social services] offices and that's proper clinical cold, cold, where that [SWP Office] is warm.'

(Parent)

Three parents were negative about the appearance and location of those pilot offices that were less user-friendly as they were serving a large geographical area. Generally, those pilots which aimed to make their offices accessible and user-friendly attracted positive comments. However, in SWP A, only one parent knew the offices, which were located away from the centre of town. This lack of familiarity with the building echoes the comments of the children and young people interviewed (see Chapter 4).

5.6 Relationships with Carers

Thirteen parents discussed the accessibility, responsiveness and quality of their relationships with foster carers and residential staff with whom their children were placed. Some parents did not discuss this because all or some of their children were placed back at home or because their children were care leavers.

Schofield and Ward's (2011) study of parents whose children were in long-term foster care found that parents had limited contact with foster carers, but most of the parents in our study who expressed a view were positive about the frequency and nature of contact that they had with carers and residential staff. This may reflect the selection process adopted for recruiting these interviewees, but some parents were highly critical of SWP staff, suggesting that they were not selected on the basis of their positive relationships with professionals. Two parents described difficulties in the relationship with the current carers and two others described difficulties with carers in the recent past.

Parents valued carers whom they were able to communicate with, and who gave them support. Three parents talked about carers helping to arrange transport for contact and two had spent Christmas or holidays together with carers and their children. One parent described supporting her daughter to maintain a relationship with her ex-foster carer, although the child was now placed back at home.

The sense that carers trusted and respected them was important to parents. Parents appreciated carers who '*gave them leeway*' and weren't '*sitting on your shoulder listening to every word you're saying during contact*'. One parent described her relationship with her child's foster carer as 'just like an extended family, we've been away together and everything' (SWP B). Another parent maintained frequent contact with a Residential Unit by phone; the staff were described as pro-active in their approach to keeping the parent informed:

'She rings me once a week anyway and, or if I, if I've rung her, you know, if I need any information I'll ring her.'

(Parent)

Two parents made positive comparisons regarding their experience of relationships with carers prior to their children joining the SWPs. In one case, the social worker had changed the placement. In another, the social worker had helped the parent to see the existing carer in a more positive light.

'I was led to believe [by Social Services] that she just wanted my children off me. So that drove a massive wedge in between our relationship. And it was

> *only when we went under [SWP] that things started coming out. And it was like 'Well no, you never wanted my kids, you took them **for** me'. So we, our relationship now is fantastic, I couldn't ask for it better.'*
>
> (Parent)

Examples such as this suggest the potential for social work intervention to have a substantial impact on the quality of the relationship between birth parents and carers (Fisher et al. 2000; Schofield and Ward 2011).

5.7 Contact

As noted in the previous chapter, arrangements for contact were often complex, sometimes parents were involved in different journeys and arrangements for different children. Social workers could reduce the demands involved by funding travel to contact sessions or providing parents and children with lifts. Where the SWP offices included space for contact sessions to be held there, this was appreciated by those who used the facilities. One parent enjoyed the opportunities for shared activities such as baking with her children at the SWP offices and appreciated having staff available if she needed them:

> *'…we're sort of left to do our own thing but obviously the workers are around to check on us, and if…I need that extra bit of support.'*
>
> (Parent)

Another compared the pilot offices favourably to the little '*cubby room*' offered for contact by social services and described the setting as inclusive and welcoming:

> *'…here we can cook a meal together or we can go on the computers or we can have a game of pool…I can do more things with him, so he's not bored so quickly….It's more fun here…it's not like down at the other place where the staff are shut behind a wall … here you do get to see them all and you talk to them all…'*
>
> (Parent)

However, one parent felt that he would prefer to have contact away from the pilot offices where he would feel less constrained.

Other parents valued being given cards which allowed them to use the local sports centre on contact trips or receiving funding for meals and activities out with their children on birthdays. One parent had received financial support from the SWP to take her children on holiday.

Parents varied in whether they considered the current amount and type of contact sufficient. Eight parents felt that they currently had the right amount and type of contact. Three parents reported that contact had increased since their child had moved to the SWP. Two parents, both from SWP D, a pilot that identified work with birth parents as an explicit priority, described their workers as making focused efforts to build contact up from a previously low level. This parent described how the social worker facilitated and monitored the increased contact:

'we had…weekly contact with the social worker and there were phone calls as well, just checking in and making sure everything's going well, the Social Worker had appointment with myself, my husband and [the carers] and with [the children] as well to make sure everyone was happy with the way it was going, any concerns that were raised, it was talked through…'

(Parent)

In contrast, five parents were unhappy with the current amount and type of contact. One of these parents had been given no support to maintain contact with her child who was in a residential setting. Another described being given conflicting messages by pilot staff in response to her requests that contact be increased:

'…they say 'Well I can't see that being a problem', they come back to you a couple of days later and say "No, my manager said no." '

(Parent)

This excerpt conveys some of the difficulties practitioners face in making front-line decisions about contact and in communicating these decisions to parents. Some parents acknowledged that the restrictions they experienced were imposed by court orders. Those parents who were happy about the nature and amount of contact they had were also likely to feel that they played a role in making decisions about contact:

'…it's sort of really arranged between me, the social worker and the carers. we've just got good communication between the three of us…and [we] like have a meeting every so often [to] see how it's going.'

(Parent)

Where parents judged the pilot's work positively overall, flexibility and consideration in relation to contact were major factors affecting that assessment. Staff were described as cutting away the '*red tape*' that could restrict contact. They were seen to work over weekends to facilitate contact, to provide funding to support easier travel to contact and for activities that took place during contact. These staff were seen to respond to parents' needs as well as children's:

'they cater for the children's needs primarily, but as well for my needs.'

(Parent)

When parents highlighted negative experiences these were also likely to relate to contact and involved wanting more contact or encountering difficulties in accessing support for contact visits at weekends.

5.8 Levels of Support

Nearly two-thirds of parents were satisfied with the level of support they received from the pilot. However, less than half of parents of disabled children and care leavers were satisfied with the support provided, perhaps as a consequence of higher levels of need.

In some cases, support involved help with transport costs or being transported to see their children for contact and review meetings. Three parents talked about the support they had received to help them have their children back at home some or all of the time. Others described structured direct work, nurturing courses and life story work. Support that was immediate and responsive to a crisis was particularly appreciated:

> *'When my son's got a problem, they all handle him straightaway, they won't put him on a back burner and say right we'll deal with a, deal with him in a, you know, it's nip it in the bud straight away with him.'*
>
> (Parent)

Six parents talked about workers having put time into developing positive relationships with their children.

> *'s/he's not just one of these that just sits …, you know, s/he seems to go that extra, you know, that extra mile so to speak, you know, so that's good. … That's, the main thing is, you know, the children …find him/her approachable, have a good rapport with him/her, that's really what matters…'*
>
> (Parent)

Having more time was a key theme. A quarter of parents (5) considered that the support they received was greater than that experienced prior to joining the SWP. They explained this in terms of allocated workers having more time:

> *'[the new worker] seems to have more time to spend with them and the children know him/her more than the other Social Workers I think…, s/he's more like a friend to them, so I think that s/he's probably someone that they could trust more to talk to.'*
>
> (Parent)

Seven parents were unhappy about aspects of the support they and their children received. Some of them did not get the help with transport that the other parents reported. Three felt that workers did not spend the time getting to know them and establishing relationships with their children. Four were unhappy with delays in workers doing things they had requested such as making phone calls, setting up new placements or supplying paperwork. In line with their views on staff attitudes, three of the four parents from SWP B were dissatisfied with the support they and their children received.

A number of parents described on-going difficulties in parenting their children. These difficulties related to problems in managing teenagers' difficult behaviour which could be related to special needs and which encompassed criminal behaviour, violent or abusive behaviour and refusal to follow rules or attend education. Some were able to discuss these problems with their SWP worker but others felt left to deal with them on their own.

Six parents felt that their child's needs were not currently being met by the SWP. Most of these concerns involved older children: two parents felt that the support one of their children had received from the SWP on leaving care compared poorly with that received by an older child who had been supported by Children's Services; one parent was concerned that the SWP staff had not been able to ensure referrals to other services were followed through by other providers. Two parents felt that the SWP needed to intervene more proactively to manage their child's violent behaviour which was sometimes directed at their parents and siblings. Three parents (two from SWP B) were very concerned about their child's current situation and felt that the SWP had nothing to offer them.

5.9 Involvement and Engagement in Decision Making

Less than half the parents felt they were kept well informed about what was happening in their children's lives and were supported to engage in a range of decision making activities. A larger minority felt they were usually informed but not engaged in many decisions. Two parents felt they were totally excluded from decision making in their children's lives. Disabled adults, particularly parents of disabled children, were more likely to feel excluded from decision making and only partially informed.

Seven parents felt informed but only two felt that they were engaged in day-to-day decision making about their children.

Three parents spoke of only being informed about negative things:

> *'they'll only tell me something if something's negative. They never tell me if they've done a play or done award, nothing.'*
>
> (Parent)

Six parents felt excluded from day-to-day decisions. Two parents reported that major decisions relating to placement moves were taken without their involvement; they only heard about it afterwards:

> *'A couple of times they've [the SWP has] moved them, then told me.'*
>
> (Parent)

5.9.1 Disagreements with Social Workers

We asked parents what happened when they had disagreements with their allocated workers. A few said they never had disagreements with their workers. Two-thirds said that when there were disagreements they were handled in a good way. About one third of parents said disagreements were not dealt with well.

One parent described receiving support from the pilot when she made a complaint. This parent described dealing with disagreements through negotiation and discussion:

> *'[if we disagreed] 'we would sit and talk through it, both of us give our reasons and we'll come to a conclusion together.'*
>
> (Parent)

However, another parent felt so concerned that nothing happened when she expressed her disagreement to a social worker that s/he was contacting his/her MP.

5.9.2 Involvement in Reviews

Seven parents felt engaged in formal decision making processes through review meetings reporting that in reviews *'we always get asked what should be done and how do we go about it?'* In two cases, a consistent relationship with an IRO was described as compensating for absence of support from social workers.

However, eight parents described not being listened to in review meetings and information not being shared there. Six of these parents blamed IROs for all, or part, of their non-involvement in reviews. Two parents who felt they were ignored at reviews no longer attended them:

'I feel left out…left on the side…I would rather be more involved, I mean at the moment how I feel, I don't feel like going back to the reviews because that's how I feel.'

(Parent)

5.9.3 Comparison with Previous Experiences of Involvement in Decision Making

Ten parents compared their experiences of decision making with experiences prior to joining the pilots. More than half said they were more informed and more involved in making decisions. Two said there was no difference. One parent said some things were better and other things were worse; one said things were worse.

Two parents who felt disagreements were handled better were very positive, with one noting that information about the children was now 'all up front'. Another parent described having increased influence over the social worker's decisions:

'I phoned [social worker name] up and I was like well mine and [my partner's] worry is that we've got to pick up the pieces when [my child] comes home with his/her behaviour. … so I don't want contact to go ahead. And she [social worker] was like 'Yeah, that's sound'. And then contact stopped.'

(Parent)

Two parents said review meetings were worse since their child had moved to the pilot. One suggested that more frequent but less formal meetings would be more constructive:

'instead of putting me in a meeting every six months let me, …have little meetings with his carers and his social workers ….because you, all you hear is all the bad, negative things he's done, there's not enough time to hear about the good things. I think if they had them every three months it'd be easier for the parent.'

(Parent)

5.10 Overview of Parents' Perceptions and Experiences

Overall, parents' perceptions of the pilots were very mixed. This possibly reflects their ambivalence about their children's looked after status but differences between the pilots seem to suggest that the SWPs varied in the time and attention given to parents' needs. Parents were highly critical of the performance of SWP B and although only four parents were interviewed from this SWP, some of their comments about accessibility and responsiveness were consistent with the comments of other professionals and IROs reported in Chapter 3.

A surprising number of parents had experienced a change of worker since their child had been with the pilot although this wasn't always perceived to be a change for the worse. Perceptions of accessibility and responsiveness were mixed. High levels of accessibility and responsiveness were appreciated when they were available. Being known to other staff in the offices and having user-friendly premises made some parents feel valued and facilitated contact. Contact was important to parents and social workers could make a difference in this area by assisting with arrangements and involving parents in decisions about contact.

SWP staff were described as having additional time available to deliver support to parents. Most parents liked their workers and felt they were listened to, but staff were considered to be better

at understanding their children's needs than they were at understanding parents' needs. Parents particularly valued staff who took their needs into account and treated them respectfully. For this group of parents, relationships with carers seemed generally positive and parents provided examples of pilot staff intervening to support these relationships.

Less than half the parents felt that they were well informed about their children's lives – this was also an issue for parents participating in Schofield and Ward's (2011) study - and information about the work of the pilots also seemed to have been limited. However, over half those who made the comparison did feel more involved in decision making about their children than they were prior to the pilots. Those parents who were generally most dissatisfied with the support they received included parents from SWP B and those with teenage children with violent or disruptive behaviour.

Chapter 5 Summary Points

- Parents' perceptions of the pilots were very mixed reflecting variations between SWPs and between individual workers.

- Parents with teenage children with violent or disruptive behaviour (sometimes attributed to special needs) were most likely to feel unsupported.

- Staff attitudes were important to parents who did not appreciate being marginalised or talked down to. Parents valued staff who acknowledged their needs in addition to those of their children. The majority of those interviewed reported that they felt their social workers respected them, treated them as parents and listened to them.

- Perceptions of accessibility and responsiveness varied but some parents considered that pilot social workers had more time available for them and appreciated staff who seemed to '*go that extra mile*'.

- Contact was extremely important to parents and they valued user-friendly offices where they were known to other staff and where there were facilities to support active forms of contact.

- Relationships with carers were generally described as positive and parents provided examples of pilot staff supporting and facilitating these relationships.

- Perceptions of information giving and involvement in decision making were mixed and it was notable that where parents felt involved in decisions about contact they were more likely to be content with its amount and nature.

Chapter 6 - SWP Impact on Carers

The evaluation aimed to ascertain the impact of the SWP pilots on carers' views of the support they and the children placed with them received from social workers. As well as effects on overall support, we looked at effects of the support offered by social workers concerning children's physical and emotional health, their attendance at school or college, their educational attainment and opportunities for them to participate in positive activities they enjoyed. We also looked at the impact of the pilots on carers' views of the quality of the relationship they had with children and young people.

We surveyed carers in the six original SWP host authorities and in six matched comparison authorities in 2009/2010 in order to gain a picture prior to any emerging effects of the SWP pilots. A follow-up survey was conducted in the five remaining SWP host authority sites and the six comparison sites in 2011. We used a cluster non-randomised design where each local authority constituted a cluster. Data collected at follow-up from carers of SWP children were compared with data from carers of children in host authorities and comparison sites in order to identify differences and similarities. Baseline factors were built into the model used to analyse intervention effects. (For further detail of the statistical analysis, see Appendix 5.)

Postal questionnaires were sent to all foster carers, kin carers, managers of residential units and supported lodgings providers in each local authority at baseline and follow-up. Questionnaires covered the following areas: support the carer received from social workers, for themselves and an SWP child, or a child from the host or control authority, and a demographic profile of themselves and the child.

6.1 Survey Response Rates

At baseline (Time 1) a total of 4,241 questionnaires was sent out; 2,521 of these were in SWP host authority sites and 1,720 were in comparison sites. At follow-up (Time 2) 3,890 questionnaires were sent out: 2,252 in host authority sites and 1,638 in comparison sites. The overall response rate to the survey was 42% at baseline, with 1,129 responses in SWP host authority sites and 653 responses in comparison sites. The response rate at follow-up was 43%, with 958 responses in SWP host authority sites and 718 responses in comparison sites.

Carers who had no children or young people from the relevant local authority placed with them at the time they returned the questionnaire were excluded from the analysis. This left a total of 1511 respondents at baseline (934 from host authority sites and 577 from comparison sites) and 1481 respondents at follow-up (875 from host authority sites and 606 from comparison sites). A breakdown of these respondents is shown in Table 6.1.

At follow-up, we asked carers in host local authority sites if they cared for a child or young person from the local SWP and compared the 212 carers who looked after a child from an SWP (intervention arm) with the 1195 carers who looked after a child from the host authorities and comparison sites (control arm) (see Table 6.2). We excluded those carers from host authorities who did not know if they looked after an SWP child or not, which was a sizeable proportion in four of the five sites. Carers from this excluded group were more likely to be kin carers (27% of all kin carers in host local authority sites, compared with 8% of foster carers, no supported lodging providers and one manager of a residential unit). They were more likely to be female, have no formal qualifications and to care for children who were 'not White British'. In Local Authority C, the number of respondents who looked after an SWP child/young person was 140

(see Table 6.1), but in all other sites numbers were relatively low, ranging from six in Local Authority A to 32 in Local Authority D.

Table 6.1 Respondents with at least one relevant local authority placement by site at baseline (Time 1) and follow-up (Time 2)

SWP Host Authority Sites

	Total at Time 1		Total at Time 2	Total SWP	Total host authority	Missing
SWP A	48		50	6	33	11
SWP B	75		67	20	34	13
SWP C	406		433	140	289	4
SWP D	174		187	32	121	34
SWP E	84		0	0	0	0
SWP F	147		138	14	112	12
TOTAL	**934**		**875**	**212**	**589**	**74**

Comparison sites

	Total at Time 1		Total at Time 2
C1	37		35
C2	248		255
C3	55		48
C4	137		157
C5	37		42
C6	63		69
TOTAL	**577**		**606**

Table 6.2 Respondents by survey arm at Time 2 - whether looked after an SWP child or young person

Intervention arm (SWPs)	Control arm (comparison and host LAs)		
Total carers of SWP child	**Total control carers of host local authority child**	**Total control carers from comparison local authority**	**Total control carers**
212	589	606	**1195**

6.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Carers and Children at Time 1

At baseline, demographic characteristics of the carer and the child who had been placed with the carer the longest were compared between host local authority sites and comparison sites to determine differences between the two samples (see Tables 6.3 and 6.4). At Time 1, most of the carers were female and White British, with a median age of 51 years, as shown in Table 6.3. Almost one-fifth had no educational qualifications. The carers' age distribution varied between types of sites and a somewhat higher proportion of carers in comparison sites compared with host local authority sites was unqualified.

Table 6.3 Demographic characteristics of carers by host local authority site and comparison site at Time 1

		Host local authority site (N=934) **n (%)**	**Comparison site** (N=577) **n (%)**	**Total** (N=1511) **n (%)**	**P-values[8]**
Female		801 (88.7)	477 (87.5)	1278 (88.3)	0.50
Ethnicity (N=1488)	**White British**	850 (92.3)	532 (93.8)	1382 (92.9)	0.26
	Not White British	71 (7.7)	35 (6.2)	106 (7.1)	
Median age (N=1431)		52 years	51 years	51 years	
No educational qualifications (N=1455)		156 (17.4)	119 (21.3)	275 (18.9)	0.06

[8]P-values show the probability of differences in the data being due to chance. Where the P-value is less than 0.05 the difference observed occurs by chance alone less than five times in 100, so is said to be statistically significant.

Table 6.4 compares the demographic characteristics of the children and young people in host local authority sites and comparison sites. There were significant differences in age and ethnicity between children from local authorities with an SWP and comparison sites. Children in the former were older and a higher proportion was not White British, although in other respects the two groups were similar (see Appendix 4 for a similar demographic picture of the SWP children and young people).

Table 6.4 Demographic characteristics of the child or young person placed with the carer the longest by host authority site and comparison site at Time1

		Host local authority site (N=934) **n (%)**	**Comparison site** (N=577) **n (%)**	**Total** (N=1511) **n (%)**	**P-values**
Age (N=1471)	**Under 5**	136 (14.8)	111 (20.0)	247 (16.8)	0.02
	5-10	183 (20.0)	125 (22.5)	308 (20.9)	
	11-15	388 (42.4)	199 (35.9)	587 (39.9)	
	Over 15	209 (22.8)	120 (21.6)	329 (22.4)	
Ethnicity (N=1492)	**White British**	756 (81.8)	494 (87.0)	1250 (83.8)	0.01
	Not White British	167 (18.1)	74 (13.0)	241 (16.2)	
Female (N=1478)		395 (43.3)	265 (46.8)	660 (44.7)	0.19
Has disability (N=1468)		337 (37.2)	187 (33.3)	524 (35.7)	0.14
In mainstream education, employment or training (statutory school age or above) (N=1202)		630 (82.4)	365 (83.3)	996 (82.7)	0.68
Median length of placement (N=1294)		24 months	22 months	23 months	
Type of placement (N=1511)	**Foster carer**	759 (81.3)	455 (78.9)	1214 (80.3)	0.07
	Kin carer	107 (11.5)	73 (12.7)	180 (11.9)	
	Residential unit	48 (4.8)	42 (7.2)	90 (5.7)	
	Supported lodging	23 (2.5)	7 (1.2)	30 (2.0)	
No changes of social worker in last year (N=1484)		414 (44.9)	275 (48.7)	689 (46.3)	0.73

6.1.2 Demographic Characteristics of Carers and Children at Time 2

At follow-up, demographic characteristics of the carer and the child who had been placed with them the longest were compared between the intervention arm (SWPs) and the control arm

(host authorities and comparison sites). As Table 6.5 shows, the majority of carers at Time 2 were female and White British, with little difference between intervention and control arms. Carers were older in SWPs with a significantly different age distribution, partly because they were looking after an older age group. Significantly fewer carers had no educational qualifications where placements were from the host local authority (14% v. 19% in the SWP and 21% in the comparison local authority). The social characteristics of carers at Time 1 and Time 2 were similar.

Our sample, with a median age of 51 years, was an older one than that found in other large-scale studies (Sinclair et al. 2004, Bebbington and Miles 1990) with a higher proportion of qualified carers (Sinclair et al. 2004). Ethnicity of carers varies widely across other studies, and differs from our sample, due to wide regional variations.

Table 6.5 Demographic characteristics of carers by survey arm – at T2

		Intervention arm	Control arm				
		SWP (N=212) **n (%)**	**Host LA** (N=589) **n (%)**	**Comparison LA** (N=606) **n (%)**	**Total** (N=1481) **n (%)**	**Difference between SWP / Host LA / comparison LA P-values**	**Difference between SWP / non-SWP P-values**
Female (N=1452)		183 (87.6)	484 (84.0)	512 (85.9)	1248 (86.0)	0.41	0.33
Ethnicity (N=1481)	**White British**	199 (93.9)	542 (92.0)	570 (94.1)	1375 (92.8)	0.68	0.89
	Not White British	12 (5.7)	42 (7.1)	33 (5.4)	97 (6.5)		
Median age (N=1431)		54 years	51 years	51 years	51 years		
No educational qualifications (N=1426)		40 (18.9)	80 (13.6)	114 (20.7)	255 (17.9)	0.03	0.79

Children and young people cared for by SWPs were a significantly older sample, with 86% being over 15 years compared with 15% in the control arm (see Table 6.6). This reflected the high numbers of care leavers in SWPs and the fact that very few of the carers from the largest SWP (C), which was restricted to young people of 16 years and above, were excluded from the analysis due to carers being unaware of whether they were looking after an SWP child or not. There were significantly fewer children and young people of statutory school age or above who were in mainstream education, training or employment in SWPs than in the control arm (64% v. 80%). This was partly due to the higher number of SWP children who were in an alternative

school such as a special school or pupil referral unit (46% of those of statutory school age in SWPs v. 18% in the control arm). The high proportion of over-15 year olds in the SWP sample meant that there were significantly fewer children in foster care in the SWPs than in the host and comparison sites (57% v. 84%) and significantly more young people in supported lodgings (31% v. 1%). A higher proportion of SWP over-15 year olds were in supported lodgings than was the case in the control arm, and they were less likely to be in education, training and employment than their counterparts in foster care. In other respects, characteristics of young people across the sample were similar.

The baseline and follow-up surveys differed in respect of the proportion of children and young people in mainstream education, employment or training (83% at Time 1 compared with 77% at Time 2). At follow-up, we clarified our definition of 'alternative school' when we asked about the type of school the child attended. This appeared to increase the likelihood of respondents choosing this option, thereby lessening the proportion of children falling into the category of mainstream educated (20% at Time 1 compared with 11% at Time 2).

Table 6.6 Demographic characteristics of the child or young person placed with the carer the longest by survey arm – at Time 2

		Intervention arm	Control arm				
		SWP (N=212) **n (%)**	**Host LA** (N=589) **n (%)**	**Comparison** LA (N=606) **n (%)**	**Total** (N=1481) **n (%)**	**Difference between SWP/ host LA/ comparison LA P-values**	**Difference between SWP/ non-SWP P-values**
Age (N=1481)	**Under 5**	1 (5.0)	119 (20.2)	131 (21.5)	258 (17.4)	0.00	0.00
	5-10	10 (4.7)	170 (28.8)	160 (26.4)	354 (23.9)		
	11-15	37 (17.5)	235 (39.9)	197 (32.5)	493 (33.3)		
	Over 15	161 (75.9)	64 (10.9)	115 (19.0)	363 (24.5)		
Ethnicity (N=1481)	**White British**	183 (86.3)	497 (84.4)	520 (85.8)	1254 (84.7)	0.56	0.32
	Not White British	26 (12.3)	89 (15.1)	82 (13.5)	213 (14.4)		
Female (N=1470)		101 (48.1)	233 (39.7)	270 (44.7)	636 (43.3)	0.06	0.11
Has disability (N=1466)		81 (38.4)	211 (36.1)	204 (34.0)	520 (35.5)	0.48	0.35
In mainstream education, employment or training (where statutory school age or above) (N=1246)		134 (63.5)	378 (78.8)	389 (79.9)	953 (76.5)	0.00	0.00
Median length of placement (N=1294)		24 months	18 months	20 months	20 months		
Placement type (N=1481)	**Foster carer**	120 (56.6)	521 (88.3)	485 (80.0)	1178 (79.5)	0.00	0.00
	Kin carer	15 (7.1)	38 (6.4)	88 (14.5)	161 (10.9)		
	Residential unit	11 (5.2)	25 (4.2)	23 (3.8)	60 (4.1)		
	Supported lodging	66 (31.1)	6 (1.0)	10 (1.7)	82 95.5)		
No changes of social worker in last year (N=1477)		87 (41.0)	278 (47.3)	280 (46.4)	678 (45.9)	0.25	0.10

6.2 Analysis of Survey Data

Ten main outcome measures were selected for analysis:

- How supported the carer felt by the child's social worker
- How satisfied the carer was with support from their key link worker
- How supported the carer felt by the child's social worker re child's physical health
- How supported the carer felt by the child's social worker re child's emotional health
- How supported the carer felt by the child's social worker re child's disability
- How supported the carer felt by the child's social worker re helping child attend school/college
- How supported the carer felt by the child's social worker re helping child achieve its best in school/college
- How supported the carer felt by the child's social worker re helping child re positive activities
- How much the carer agreed that the child talked to them if worried or upset

An ordinal logistic regression model was used for analysis that controlled for differences in demographic characteristics at baseline and follow-up. Carers were clustered within local authorities, but we were unable to conduct a clustered analysis because some clusters were too small to justify this. As a compromise, robust standard errors were used, which would not be unduly affected by outliers in the data, to estimate the adjusted effects of the intervention on the outcome variables.

Due to the small numbers within intervention clusters, it was not possible to analyse separately the effects of the intervention on support in specific areas of health, education and leisure activities. We therefore created a composite outcome measure that combined how supported the carer felt regarding the child's physical health, emotional health, disability, school/college attendance, achievement and participation in positive activities. (For a detailed account of the analysis, see Appendix 5.)

6.2.1 Survey Results

Odds ratios compared the odds of SWP carers versus control carers reporting positive or negative responses in relation to the outcome measures once adjusted. Carers looking after an SWP child were more likely than carers looking after a child from the host or comparison authority to express satisfaction about: overall support from the child's social worker in the last six months and support from the social worker regarding health, education or leisure activities (see Table 6.7). These are unlikely to be chance findings.

Table 6.7 shows that carers looking after an SWP child were slightly less likely than carers looking after a child from the host or comparison authority to express satisfaction about support from their key link worker and were less likely to agree that the child talked to them if worried or upset, although both these could be chance findings.

Table 6.7 Adjusted effect of the SWP intervention on main outcomes (intervention v. control arm)

Intervention-Endpoint interaction	Odds ratio[9]	95% confidence interval[10]	P-value
Carer supported overall by child's social worker in last 6 months	1.62	1.03 – 2.54	0.03
Carer satisfied with support from key link worker in last 6 months	0.96	0.57 – 1.63	0.89
Carer supported by child's social worker in last 6 months re health, education or leisure activities (where needed help)	1.61	1.10 – 2.36	0.01
Carer agreed that child talked to them in last 6 months if worried or upset	0.88	0.48 – 1.60	0.68

Table 6.8 describes the unadjusted[11] outcomes by intervention and control arms at follow-up. About three-quarters or slightly more carers in both arms of the study felt well satisfied or fairly well satisfied with support from the child's social worker overall and regarding the child's physical health, school/college attendance and educational achievement. Satisfaction with support from key workers employed by fostering placement agencies was high, as has been found in other studies (Sinclair et al. 2004), with a somewhat higher proportion of carers in the control arm (86%) feeling satisfied compared with intervention arm carers (79%). A slightly lower proportion of carers in general felt satisfied regarding support with a child's disability (71%) and emotional health/behaviour (72%) with no difference between arms of the survey. Carers felt least satisfied with support regarding helping the child participate in positive activities (around two-thirds expressed satisfaction). A high proportion of carers across both survey arms agreed that the child talked to them if worried or upset (88%), suggesting that carers in general felt that they had a good relationship with the child placed with them.

[9] Where the odds ratio is greater than 1 there is an increased likelihood amongst SWP carers of having a positive response to the outcome measures compared with carers from host local authorities or comparison sites; where the odds ratio is less than 1 there is decreased likelihood of such a response.

[10] The 95% confidence interval shows one can be 95% confident that the true effect of the SWP intervention lies within this range. So where the whole extent of the range is above 1, one can be 95% confident that the SWP intervention led to more SWP carers having a positive response to the outcome measures compared with carers from host local authorities or comparison sites. Where the range extends across 1, the findings have a greater than 5% likelihood of being due to chance.

[11] These 'unadjusted' figures have not been controlled for the effect of confounding factors, such as differences in age or type of placement between intervention and control arms, that could affect outcomes.

Table 6.8 Comparison of main outcome measures by survey arms – at Time 2

	Intervention arm	Control arm			
	SWP (N=212) **n (%)**	**All non-SWP** (N=1195) **n (%)**	**Host LA** (N=589) **n (%)**	**Control LA** (N=606) **n (%)**	**Total** (N=1481) **n (%)**
Carer felt well/fairly well supported overall by child's SW in last 6 months (N=1382)	155 (76.4)	859 (77.3)	418 (74.9)	441 (79.7)	1066 (77.1)
Carer very/fairly satisfied with support from their key link worker in last 6 months (N=1433)	163 (78.7)	989 (85.6)	486 (85.1)	503 (86.0)	1207 (84.2)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months re child's physical health (of those who needed help) (N=434)	48 (78.7)	276 (78.9)	125 (76.7)	151 (80.7)	342 (78.8)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months re child's disability (of those who needed help) (N=323)	38 (70.4)	183 (70.4)	83 (66.4)	100 (74.1)	228 (70.6)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months re child's emotional health/ behaviour (of those who needed help) (N=947)	97 (71.3)	551 (71.6)	268 (69.8)	283 (73.3)	678 (71.6)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months with helping child/young person attend school/college (of those who needed help) (N=419)	71 (74.0)	237 (78.5)	111 (75.5)	126 (81.3)	326 (77.8)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months with helping child do its best in school/ college (of those carers who needed help) (N=621)	79 (73.1)	370 (77.1)	176 (74.6)	194 (79.5)	477 (76.8)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months with helping child re positive activities (of those carers who needed help) (N=566)	59 (64.1)	306 (69.2)	151 (70.2)	155 (68.3)	389 (68.7)
Carer agreed/strongly agreed that child talked to them in last 6 months if worried or upset (N=1294)	180 (88.2)	904 (88.6)	457 (89.6)	447 (87.6)	1150 (88.8)

Table 6.9 describes the unadjusted findings for the individual pilots but, as numbers are low in two sites in particular, the figures should be treated with caution. The 32 carers of children in SWP D expressed higher than average levels of satisfaction than carers in general regarding support from the child's social worker concerning the child's physical health, disability, emotional health and school attendance but were less likely than average to feel that children talked to them. Only 14 carers of young people from SWP F were surveyed but they reported higher than average levels of satisfaction with support in all respects. The carers of young people in SWP C showed a similar response to the average of all carers on all outcomes. The 20 carers in SWP B expressed less satisfaction with support in all respects than other carers, although they were more likely than carers on average to report that the child shared worries with them. The number of carers in the in-house site (SWP A) who identified the child placed with them as being from the SWP was very low, probably reflecting a lack of awareness that the SWP was operating at arm's length from the local authority.

Table 6.9 Main outcomes by SWP pilot at Time 2

	SWP A (N=6) **n (%)**	**SWP B** (N=20) **n (%)**	**SWP C** (N=140) **n (%)**	**SWP D** (N=32) **n (%)**	**SWP F** (N=14) **n (%)**	**ALL SWP pilots** (N=212) **n (%)**
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months (N=203)	5 (83.3)	10 (58.8)	104 (77)	24 (77.4)	12 (85.7)	155 (76.4)
Carer very/fairly satisfied with support from their key link worker in last 6 months (N=207)	6 (100)	12 (63.2)	108 (79.4)	24 (75)	13 (92.9)	163 (78.7)
Carer well/fairly well supported re child's physical health (of those who needed help) (N=61)	0 (0)	2 (50.0)	33 (78.6)	11 (84.6)	2 (100)	48 (78.7)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported re child's disability (of those who needed help) (N=54)	2 (100)	2 (50.0)	27 (67.5)	5 (83.3)	2 (100)	38 (70.4)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported re child's emotional health/ behaviour (of those who needed help) (N=136)	3 (75)	6 (40.0)	64 (69.6)	17 (85)	4 (80.0)	97 (71.3)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months with helping child/young person attend school/college (of those carers who needed help where child of statutory school age) (N=96)	1 (100)	4 (44.4)	52 (73.2)	10 (90.9)	4 (100)	71 (74)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months with helping child/young person do their best in school/college (of those carers who needed help) (N=108)	3 (75)	8 (61.5)	49 (71)	12 (80)	7 (100)	79 (73.1)
Carer felt well/fairly well supported by child's SW in last 6 months with helping child/young person re activities (of those carers who needed help) (N=92)	0 (0)	5 (62.5)	41 (63.1)	9 (69.2)	4 (66.7)	59 (64.1)
Carer strongly agreed/agreed that child talked to carer if worried or upset (N=204)	6 (100)	19 (95.0)	119 (89.5)	24 (77.4)	12 (85.7)	180 (88.2)

Carers were asked what support from the child's social worker they had found most helpful in the previous six months. Responses from SWP carers indicated that they valued good communication and availability, such as prompt returning of calls and emails, consistent contact, listening and giving useful advice, support at meetings, and updates and information, for example, about court proceedings:

> *'Always there, good attitude, very committed'*
>
> (SWP supported lodgings provider)

SWP carers commonly found the most helpful support from the child's social worker to be help for the child or young person in relation to arrangements for contact with birth parents, help through difficult times such as school exclusion or placement changes, showing understanding about the child's vulnerability and assisting with skills to become more independent:

> *'The child in placement finds contact very disturbing sometimes. The social worker helped her to understand her rights about contact and talked through these making her feel as though she had some power instead of mum, and how to follow it though in the right way, reaffirming the child's rights.'*
>
> (SWP foster carer)

> *'[SWP] social worker only recently allocated but she has been great even though she came on board in the midst of a placement move due to the child's behaviour problems at home.'*
>
> (SWP foster carer)

> *'Has a very good understanding of his ASD [autistic spectrum disorder] and vulnerability and lack of social skills.'*
>
> (SWP foster carer)

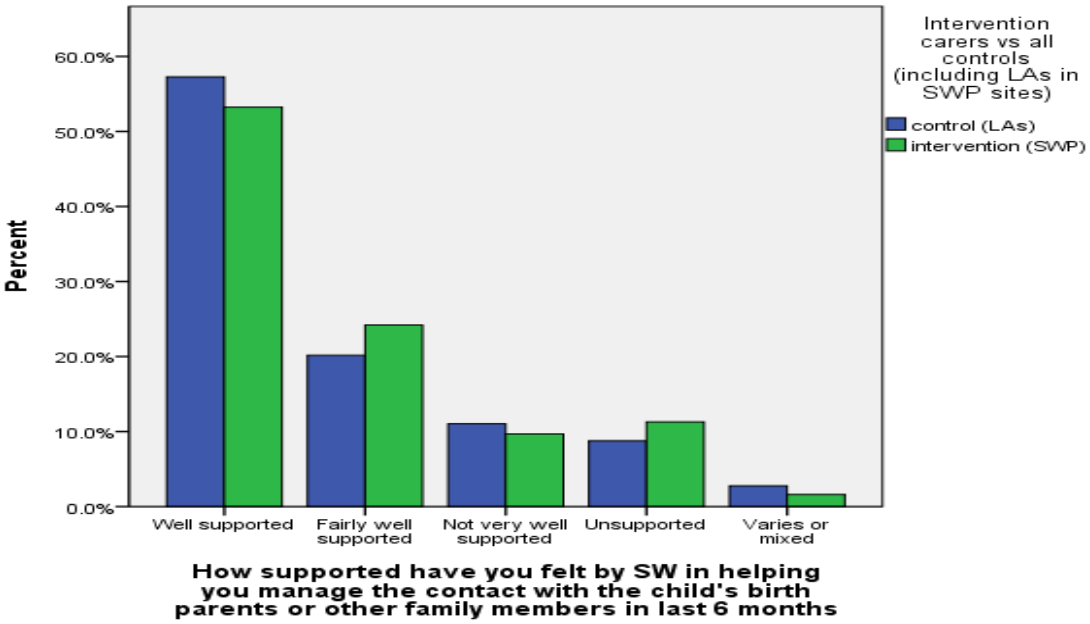
Carers also valued the social worker's ability to balance the needs of the carer and the young person, and support the carer's work with the young person:

> *'Appears to have a good skill of balancing the needs of the young person with my needs...', '…always listens to both of us.'*
>
> (SWP foster carer)

> *'Arranging and encouraging support with the young person with Connexions, very supportive with the young person's goals, very supportive of my work with the young person.'*
>
> (SWP supported lodgings provider)

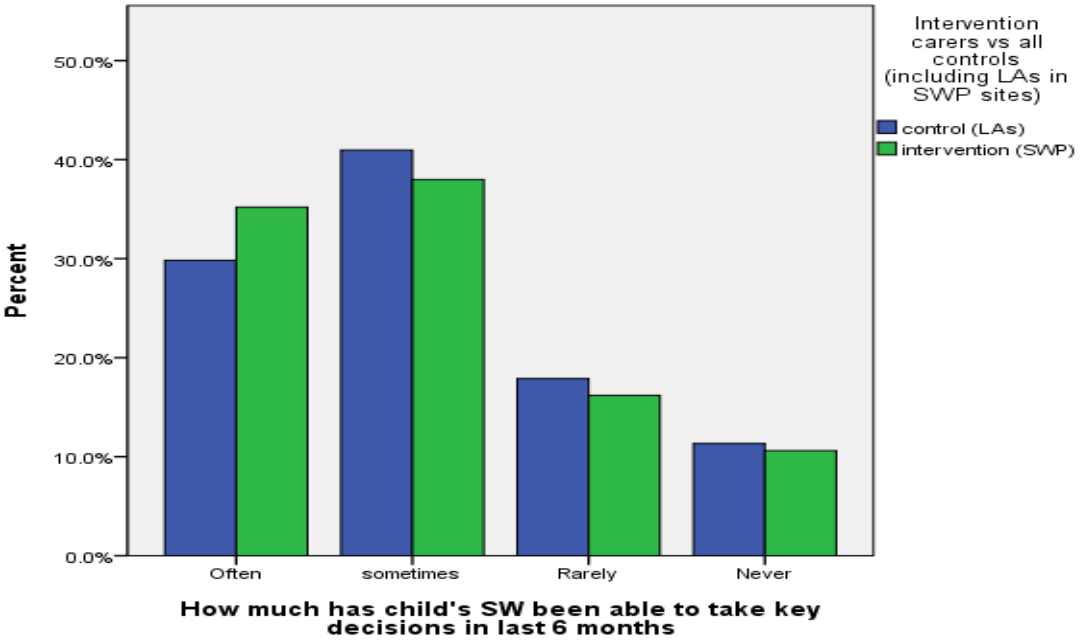
Just over three-quarters of carers overall, and in both intervention and control arms, felt well or fairly well supported around managing contact with the child's birth parents or other family members (see Figure 6.1). Satisfaction appeared higher in SWP D (21 out of 23), SWP F (9 out of 11) and SWP A (3 out of 3) and lower in SWP B (8 out of 14).

Figure 6.1 Comparison of how supported carers felt around managing contact at Time 2



As discussed in Chapter 2, the aim of bringing decision making closer to the 'front-line' was central to the SWP model. A slightly higher proportion of SWP carers (35%) compared with control arm carers (30%) felt that the child's social worker had often been able to take key decisions in the previous six months (see Figure 6.2)

Figure 6.2 Comparison of carers' views on decision making by child's social worker at Time 2



Chapter 6 Summary Points

- The carers surveyed in SWP sites (SWPs and host authorities) and comparison sites differed significantly in terms of the age and ethnicity of the child they cared for at baseline, and a somewhat higher proportion of carers in comparison sites was unqualified. However, in other respects they were well matched in terms of demographic characteristics. At follow-up, children in the intervention arm were a significantly older sample than in the control arm, significantly fewer were in mainstream education, employment or training, fewer were in foster care and more were in supported lodgings. Carers in the intervention arm were older. In other ways, demographic characteristics were similar.

- At baseline and follow-up, differences were found in respect of the proportion of children and young people in mainstream education, employment or training, but social characteristics of carers and the children they looked after were otherwise similar at Times 1 and 2.

- Once adjustments for differences were made, the intervention arm was found to have had a positive effect on carers' views of support from the child's social worker, overall and regarding health, education or leisure activities analysed as a composite, which was unlikely to be due to chance. Carers in SWP D and SWP F were particularly likely to express higher levels of satisfaction in these respects.

- Carers looking after an SWP child were slightly less likely to express satisfaction about support from their key link worker than carers in the control arm and were less likely to report that the child shared worries with them, but these findings could be due to chance.

- SWP carers particularly valued good communication and availability from the child's social worker; help for the child or young person in relation to arrangements for contact with birth parents and through challenging circumstances and transitions; and support for the carer's work with the young person.

- Carers in SWPs A, D and F were especially likely to express satisfaction with support around contact with birth families.

- A slightly higher proportion of SWP carers compared with control arm carers felt that the child's social worker had often been able to take key decisions in the previous six months.

Chapter 7 - Impact on the Workforce

One of the aims of the evaluation was to identify and measure the impact of the SWP model on the children's social care workforce. As reported in the Introduction, an online survey collected information on staff perceptions of different aspects of working with LAC and care leavers and their families using psychometrically tested measures of work dynamics, job satisfaction and burnout levels. Data were collected from SWP staff, host local authority sites[12] and the matched comparison sites at two points in time to establish 'true' change in perceptions as well as actual working dynamics, job satisfaction and job related stress levels. These data were enhanced by face-to-face interviews with a sample of SWP staff.

7.1 Participants' Profiles

Table 7.1 presents the distribution and key statistics of practitioners responding to the survey from each group at the two time points of the survey; Time 1 (Summer 2009) and Time 2 (Summer 2011). At Time 1, no data were collected from SWP staff as the pilots were not yet operational. Time 1 therefore provides a baseline against which Time 2 data can be examined.

Table 7.1 Respondents' characteristics by type of site at Time 1 and Time 2

Characteristics		Host Local Authorities		Comparison sites		SWP Pilots
		Time 1	Time 2	Time1	Time2	Time2
Gender % women		84%	86%	84%	85%	76%
n=		389	491	355	365	58
Mean age		43	46	43	45	42
n=		386	489	535	374	57
Ethnicity %	White British	74	78	83	81	78
	White other	5	7	6	7	4
	Asian	6	4	3	5	4
	Black	7	6	5	6	10
	Any other	8	5	3	1	4
	n=	384	430	357	312	51
% Working in frontline jobs		85%	77%	80%	68%	80%
n=		484	442	471	363	55
% Qualified social workers		59%	70%	71%	87%	60%
n=		536	495	492	375	57
Mean number of years in sector		12	14	13	14	11
n=		537	497	492	375	58
Mean number of years in job		4	5	4	5	3
n=		533	493	484	374	58
% Agency (temporary) workers		4%	2%	1%	5%	0%
n=		531	497	493	374	58
Trade union membership		N/K	62%	N/K	77%	34%
n=			494		376	58
Registered as social workers with the GSCC		74%	74%	90%	90%	59%
n=		389	500	356	378	58
Covered for other staff last 6 months		65%	54%	64%	56%	43%
n=		531	495	492	375	58

[12]The term 'host sites' is used here to refer to the local authorities where the pilots were situated

One key difference between the pilots and the host and comparison sites is that the SWP staff were less likely to be qualified social work professionals (see Chapter 2) and more likely to be male. While it may seem curious that SWP participants had spent over three years in their jobs on average, this is because some of the SWPs were pre-existing organisations and in two of the SWPs staff were still employed by the local authority.

7.2 Expectations of SWPs

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a 4-point Likert scale, including a 'not sure' option, on 5 statements relating to some of the anticipated consequences of SWPs, such as continuity of care, enabling staff to work in frontline practice for longer, improving the relationships between staff and other professionals and with carers, as well as reducing the amount of time spent in filling in forms and in meetings (Le Grand 2007). Table 7.2 shows the percentages of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with different statements at different time points.

Table 7.2 Percentages of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with different expectations of social work practices (SWPs) by type of site and time

Expectations of SWP	Host		Comparison		Pilots
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 2
Staff will stay in frontline for longer % Agree	67%	53%	58%	54%	65%
n=	197	124	123	108	55
Fewer changes for LAC % Agree	71%	66%	60%	65%	82%
n=	226	147	132	123	55
Improved relationships with other professionals % Agree	71%	72%	67%	82%	67%
n=	208	152	126	119	55
Improved relationships with carers % Agree	69%	68%	65%	81%	78%
n=	211	148	119	116	55
Reduced amount of time spent on form filling % Agree	41%	37%	31%	37%	22%
n=	199	126	116	112	54

At Time 1, the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed (around 70%) with all potential impacts of SWPs outlined above, except in relation to their potential to reduce the amount of time staff spend on form filling and in meetings. Interestingly, levels of agreement were close among participants from both pilot and comparison groups and similar between pilot staff and staff from the host local authorities. However, noticeably, the expectations of participants from the comparison sites increased over time, while those among the group from host local authorities tended to decline over time. One of the main differences in expectations between pilot and host authority participants related to 'fewer changes for LAC'; because SWP staff tended to have higher expectations for this (82% vs. a range of 60% to 71%).

7.3 Time Expenditure

We asked how much time had been spent on different tasks during the past six months (including an option to indicate if a task did not apply). Around a third of participants said that 'direct work with LAC', 'their birth families' and 'foster parents' were not part of their roles. After adjusting for this, Table 7.3 shows how much time participants felt they spent on each task relative to how much they felt they should be spending. One main finding relates to the close

match in responses from host and comparison groups, indicating a high validity of the measures and the likelihood that time allocations are similar across local authorities in relation to working with LAC/care leavers. Overall, there was considerable agreement that the amount of time spent on direct work with LAC/care leavers was not enough or not nearly enough, while the amount of time spent in completing forms and reports generally, but not always, consumed too much or much too much time. There was also little change over time. Participants from the SWPs were more likely to report spending the 'right amount of time' in direct work with LAC, their birth parents and foster carers. These elements are examined further below in a model that accounts for different characteristics of participants as well as site (clustering) effects.

Table 7.3 Distribution of participants' perceived time allocation of different elements of working with LAC for host, comparison and pilot sites over time

Time expenditure elements	Host Local Authorities		Comparison Sites		SWP Pilots
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 2
Direct work with LAC					
Not enough	61%	64%	63%	61%	41%
Just right	33%	31%	32%	36%	50%
Too much	6%	5%	5%	3%	9%
n=	385	339	312	256	56
Direct work with LAC's birth parents					
Not enough	55%	58%	50%	57%	39%
Just right	40%	38%	46%	39%	51%
Too much	5%	4%	4%	4%	10%
n=	356	298	280	226	51
Direct work with LAC's carers					
Not enough	46%	49%	50%	47%	35%
Just right	47%	45%	46%	48%	53%
Too much	7%	6%	4%	5%	12%
n=	382	356	322	265	51
Communicating with other professionals					
Not enough	24%	24%	21%	23%	20%
Just right	61%	62.53%	65%	65%	67%
Too much	15%	14%	14%	12%	13%
n=	435	419	389	331	55
Completing forms					
Not enough	7%	7%	4%	5%	11%
Just right	16%	17%	13%	20%	19%
Too much	77%	76%	83%	75%	70%
n=	466	448	433	352	57
Meetings and reviews					
Not enough	7%	7%	4%	5%	11%
Just right	16%	17%	13%	20%	19%
Too much	77%	76%	83%	75%	70%
n=	466	448	433	352	57

A free text option allowed participants to indicate the single aspect of their work with LAC/care leavers that they perceived to be the most positive. The most common theme centred round aspects of direct work and relationship building with young people. This option was available at the two time points of the survey and three main themes were highlighted across time: 1) Direct work with children and young people; 2) Engaging and developing trusting relationships with LAC/care leavers; and 3) Building relationships with LAC/care leavers, birth parents and foster families and empowering them. Relationships with birth families were more likely than other types of relationships to be described as poor at Time 1.

At Time 2, SWP practitioners reported being better able to build relationships than others. They also considered they spent the right amount of time working directly with LAC; in the free text responses they explained that such direct work was assisted by having lower caseloads and more time:

> *'Having a smaller caseload frees me up to work more directly with not only the young person but with foster carers, parents and other professionals to ensure a holistic approach/positive communication.'*
>
> (Practitioner, SWP)

By contrast, a practitioner from a host local authority identified the one thing that they would like to change about their current job:

> *'To have less children on my caseload which would enable me to undertake more effective work with children and parents rather than working in crisis intervention all the time'.*
>
> (Practitioner, Host site)

Host and comparison practitioners also talked positively about the value of having 'consistent relationships' and undertaking direct work with young people and families:

> *'By working with the same young people from age 18 to 21 years I have been able to develop good relationships with most of them which means they are more receptive to accept support, advice and information.'*
>
> (Practitioner, Comparison site)

7.4 Perceived Workloads

The second round of the survey at Time 2 collected information on perceived workload, asking if this had changed over the previous 6 months. There were no significant differences in the perceptions of workload between the two different arms of the study (SWPs v host LAs and comparison LAs), with most reporting that their workload felt 'much too much' or a bit 'too much' for the available time. There was a significant negative correlation[13] between participants' perceptions that they were spending the 'right amount of time in direct work with LAC' and their perception of their workload as 'much too much' or 'a bit too much' across all sites. Nearly three-quarters of participants who felt they spent the right amount of time with LAC reported that their workload was acceptable or 'too little' compared to 65% among those who felt they either spent too little or too much of their time in direct work with LAC. Such correlation was strongest for the

[13] $R_s = -.08$; $p<0.001$

pilot sites[14] and statistically not significant for the comparison sites. Asked if they felt that their workload had changed over the past six months, overall around a third reported their workload had increased, 60% indicated it had stayed the same, while 10% felt it had decreased, however this was not significantly different between pilot, host and comparison sites[15].

7.5 Views on Quality of Care and Relationships

We collected practitioners' views on different statements designed to capture some of the intended effects and consequences of SWPs (Le Grand 2007). These included continuity of care provided by the same worker to LAC and their carers and birth parents, providing continuous support through the transition from care to independence, practitioners' availability to offer time when needed, as well as type and quality of relationships with children and their families.

Participants indicated their level of agreement with nine separate statements on a 4 point Likert scale. An option of 'not applicable' was offered for those whose job did not include this specific task. Table 7.4 details the percentages of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with different statements. Overall, participants tended to agree/strongly agree that they worked with the same cases over time; they worked to ensure that LAC stayed in the same placement, and that their relationships with LAC were usually good. There was positive change in participants' views over time in the host and comparison groups. While the variations between comparison and host responses at Time 1 were not significantly different, at Time 2, SWP participants were significantly more likely to agree with the majority of these statements[16].

Table 7.4 Percentages of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements relating to nature of their work with looked after children /care leavers by site groups and over time

Elements of quality of care and relationships	Host Local Authorities		Comparison Sites		SWP Pilots
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 2
Work with the same cases over time and maintain close contact with LAC					
% Agree/strongly agree	89%	91%	86%	91%	96%
n=	363	302	295	245	54
Work to ensure that LAC stay in the same placement					
% Agree/strongly agree	94%	97%	95%	95%	98%
n=	377	324	325	277	54
Care leavers receive consistent and continuing support through the transition from care to independence					
% Agree/strongly agree	91%	90%	87%	91%	98%
n=	278	238	236	211	53

[14] R_s= -.357; p=0.006

[15] $X_4^2 = 7.48; p = 0.113$

[16] Except for the following statements where differences were not statistically significant: 'Relationships between me and looked after children and/or care leavers I work with are good'; 'Relationships between me and looked after children and/or care leavers birth families are good';

Table 7.4 Continued

Elements of quality of care and relationships	Host Local Authorities		Comparison Sites		SWP Pilots
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 2
Care leavers receive consistent and continuing support through the transition from care to independence					
% Agree/strongly agree	91%	90%	87%	91%	98%
n=	278	238	236	211	53
I am usually available or can make time for LAC/care leavers, carers and birth families I work with					
% Agree/strongly agree	76%	81%	78%	80%	89%
n=	370	310	310	254	54
The relationships between me and LAC/care leavers I work with are good					
% Agree/strongly agree	94%	96%	95%	97%	100%
n=	377	316	309	257	44
The relationships between me and LAC/care leavers' birth family are good					
% Agree/strongly agree	81%	87%	81%	86%	92%
n=	347	291	282	240	53
The relationship between me and LAC's foster carers and/or children's home staff are good					
% Agree/strongly agree	93%	96%	96%	97%	93%
n=	377	326	320	268	54
The relationships between me and the staff in other agencies when working with LAC/care leavers are good					
% Agree/strongly agree	93%	95%	93%	93%	92%
n=	390	338	326	280	53
I ensure that planning for LAC/ care leavers is effective and follow such plans through.					
% Agree/strongly agree	90%	91%	91%	92%	94%
n=	376	328	319	264	53

7.6 Views on Staff Autonomy, Participation and Support

The survey explored practitioners' levels of agreement with different statements exploring staff autonomy, participation in decision making, and learning and support at work. These were designed to capture anticipated changes consequent to the introduction of SWPs. Perceptions of the involvement of frontline staff in decision making processes within their organisations were captured using a 4-point Likert scale. The same scale was used to measure perceptions in relation to different aspects of working relationships in their organisations.

Table 7.5 highlights some important findings that were consistent across different groups of participants. Overall, most participants felt that 'frontline staff participate in decision making'; that 'innovative practice is encouraged'; 'mistakes are considered opportunities for learning'; 'supervision is a priority' and that they 'feel confident to challenge practice decisions'. On the other hand, very small percentages agreed that 'form filling is kept to minimum'.

Table 7.5 Percentage of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with different elements of work dynamics and staff participation in different groups of sites and over time

Work dynamics elements	Host Local Authorities		Comparison Sites		SWP Pilots
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 2
Frontline staff participate in decision making					
% Agree/strongly agree	72%	73%	67%	64%	77%
n=	405	386	366	317	56
Form filling kept to minimum					
% Agree/strongly agree	7%	8%	4%	3%	7%
n=	406	389	371	321	56
Innovative practice encouraged					
% Agree/strongly agree	66%	66%	63%	67%	86%
n=	395	383	366	316	56
Mistakes are opportunities for learning					
% Agree/strongly agree	62%	61%	56%	61%	85%
n=	404	380	369	317	54
Turnover is low					
% Agree/strongly agree	35%	44%	25%	33%	81%
n=	402	388	369	319	54
Adequate administrative support					
% Agree/strongly agree	39%	35%	28%	35%	57%
n=	407	390	369	321	56
Supervision is a priority					
% Agree/strongly agree	66%	74%	71%	77%	85. %
n=	404	388	371	318	54
Confident to challenge practice decisions					
% Agree/strongly agree	55%	63%	59%	64%	80%
n=	402	388	366	317	55

It is worth noting that differences between comparison and host responses were not significant[17] at both time points, however, SWP participants tended to agree more with positive statements.

At Time 2, participants indicated their agreement with two further elements: whether 'team or group discussion of cases happens regularly' and 'staff are supported in making difficult decisions'. With regard to the first statement, 73% of SWP participants agreed or strongly agreed compared with 56% of host and 50% of comparison sites. In relation to the second statement, 98% of the SWP staff agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 80% of host and 82% of comparison practitioners. Our findings from interview data enabled us to consider this area in greater depth. By year 2, most SWP staff were being supervised by a manager or external consultant. Formal peer supervision for social workers operated in only one SWP and had

[17]Except for 'adequate administrative support', where significantly more of the host participants agreed than the comparison group at T1.

proved too time-consuming to continue in the others. However, interviews confirmed that the informal peer support operating in all SWPs was fostered by the small cohesive teams. All SWP staff reported feeling happy about their professional support in making decisions, valuing its high quality and accessibility. Staff in some sites wanted more clinical supervision as well as case management and, for some, this was obtained from the local authority.

7.7 Job Satisfaction, Job Content, and Burnout Levels

7.7.1 Job Satisfaction

The survey also collected information on overall levels of satisfaction with current job and employers. Participants were asked to score their satisfaction with each of these two elements on a scale from 1 to 7; the mean level of satisfaction with current job was 4.72 (s.d.=1.27) for T1 and 4.78 (s.d.=1.24) at T2; These scores are out of a maximum of 7 and are considered good, but not excellent, scores. The differences between pilot, host and comparison site participants and across time were not significant. In terms of satisfaction with employer, this was slightly lower at 4.14 (s.d.=1.59) for Time 1 and 4.24 (s.d.=1.50) at Time 2. At Time 1, satisfaction with employer was significantly higher among comparison than in host sites; by T2, host and comparison sites' levels of satisfaction were almost identical at 4.1 and 4.2 (See Fig 1-Appendix 6). However, at Time 2, SWP staff's level of satisfaction with their employers was relatively higher at an average of 5.2 (s.d.=1.4) out of 7, these are significantly higher scores than those observed in the host and comparison groups; as well as higher than those found in the host sites at baseline.

The survey collected information on job content, decision making authority, support levels for staff and stress (using Karasek's Job Content Questionnaire 'JCQ') and burnout levels (using the Maslach Burnout Inventory 'MBI'). Participants identified workforce dynamics as one of the key elements in the success of their work as illustrated by this response:

> *'Maintaining reasonable staff morale despite staff shortages and absences over the summer holiday period and increased duty pressures due to changes around how we work with homeless young people, which in turn maintains a consistent level of service to young people and their families.'*
>
> (Host Local Authority Practitioner, Time 1)

One of the intended outcomes of SWPs was improvement in staff morale and retention. We used JCQ, MBI and job satisfaction measures to measure these elements systematically. This enabled us to identify real changes in these important job-related aspects.

7.7.2 Karasek Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ)

As reported in the Introduction, the JCQ is a self-completed instrument designed to identify two crucial aspects: job demands - the stressors existing in the work environment - and job decision latitude - the extent to which employees have the potential to control their tasks and conduct throughout the working day (Karasek et al. 1998).

Decision latitude is the sum of skills discretion and decision authority. Table 7.6 shows positive change in overall decision latitude among participants from the comparison sites (significant change from $\bar{X} = 68.4\ to\ 69.1$). Scores for SWP participants were higher than those for host Time 2 and comparison Time 2 groups. SWP Time 2 decision latitude score (71.1) was the closest to the norm for social workers as calculated by Karasek (1985); $\bar{X}$ =71.9. However,

examining the confidence intervals of scores, some SWP scores overlapped with others' scores especially among the comparison sites at Time 2.

Table 7.6 Karasek decision latitude scores for pilot, host and comparison groups at Time 1 and Time 2

Decision latitude scores	Comparison site		Host Local Authority		Pilot SWP	All	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Mean ($\bar{X}$)	68.37	69.07	66.87	67.2	71.13	67.59	68.27
S.d. (σ)	8.67	9.06	9.68	9.36	9.24	9.23	9.3
n=	365	312	397	382	55	762	749
CI upper	69.26	70.08	67.82	68.14	73.57	68.25	68.94
CI lower	67.48	68.06	65.92	66.26	68.69	66.93	67.60

To examine possible factors influencing demand and control we imputed baseline data for the pilot responses at Time 1 from the host responses[18]. We used mixed-effect models[19] to account for clustering (effect of sites on participants) and for the effect of time; the model also accounted for covariate at baseline and different personal and organizational characteristics. We constructed a series of models using a framework of analysis to incorporate the importance of individual and organisational characteristics and individual participants' beliefs and perceptions of different elements of care and job dynamics. The full results of the final model examining JCQ decision latitude are contained in Appendix 6.

The final model indicated that individual site effects were responsible for at least 51%[20] of the unmeasured variance observed and that these were attributable to site effect. The model indicated no significant differences in decision latitude scores between SWP pilot and host sites (ß=1.46; p=0.133); there was also negligible time effect. The factors that significantly improved the decision latitude scores were: belonging to 'white' ethnicity (ß=2.74; p<0.001); having higher job satisfaction scores (ß=2.64; p<0.001); and to a lesser extent higher scores of employer satisfaction (ß=0.50; p=0.011). Older participants reported significantly lower scores of decision

[18]These were imputed using conditional probability based on individual characteristics (age and gender) as well as responses to key questions at T2; responses were matched between individual pilots and their host LA.

[19] This analysis utilises Non-linear mixed models (NLME) module in R statistical environment on UNIX. We used a forward step-wise process to introduce to the model additional characteristics and interactions and tested the improvement in the overall model using AIC (Akaike information criteria) and BIC (Bayesian information criteria) to select the best model (Akaike 1974, Schwartz 1978). Non-significant factors, which did not improve the overall model, were dropped before adding new factors. The final model for each group of workers presents the best model as determined by both AIC and BIC.

[20]Using variance component analysis of random effects

latitude (ß=-0.06; p=0.006). These findings are not easily explained but they indicate that there were many changes in social work practice and roles occurring at the time that SWPs were implemented.

7.7.3 JCQ: Psychological Job Demand

Psychological job demand represents all stressors existing in the work environment. Table 7.7 indicates some reductions in psychological job demand scores from T1 to T2 for both the comparison and host groups, though these changes do not appear to be significant. The overall scores of SWP participants are lower than others; however, all confidence intervals overlap so there are no clear significant differences. For all groups, including the SWPs, job demand scores appear considerably higher than those observed for social workers by Karesek (32; σ=8.4; 1985).

Table 7.7 Karasek psychological job demand scores for pilot, host and comparison groups at T1 and T2

Psychological job demand	Comparison Sites		Host Local Authorities		SWP Pilots	All	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Mean ($\bar{X}$)	39.24	38.08	38.55	37.69	36.69	38.88	37.78
S.d. (σ)	5.85	5.63	5.91	5.87	5.55	5.89	5.76
n=	365	312	397	382	55	762	749
CI upper	39.84	38.70	39.13	38.28	38.16	39.30	38.19
CI lower	38.64	37.46	37.97	37.10	35.22	38.46	37.37

Another set of fixed-effect models was constructed to understand the association between different personal and organisational characteristics and level of psychological job demand (for details of final model see Appendix 6). Only 25% of variance was attributed to individual sites and there was a significant negative effect over time, indicating that for all participants their psychological job demand decreased. Other factors that reduced psychological job demand included experience (measured as length in social care sector) (ß=-0.04; p=0.009); job satisfaction (ß=-1.09; p<0.001); and participants' perception that they spent the right amount of time in direct work with LAC (ß=-2.03; p<0.001). On the other hand, social workers scored significantly higher than non-social work staff with regard to psychological job demand (ß=2.16; p<0.001); and participants who felt that LAC did not enter the system at the right time also had higher scores of borderline significance (ß=0.56; p=0.07).

There were no strong correlations between job control and demand among participants; scatter plots of both scores indicated that level of decision latitude (control) remained constant while job demand increased. Among SWP participants there was a negative (but not significant)

correlation between control and demand, indicating that, as job demand increased, their job control decreased, perhaps moving them into an area of 'unresolved stress'. These findings are consistent with the findings from staff interviews, which showed that, in some SWP sites, control (over budgets, for example) was reduced over time as numbers of children and young people increased.

7.7.4 JCQ: Job insecurity

Table 7.8 shows that overall levels of job insecurity over time remained almost identical among comparison site participants; however they were slightly higher among SWP staff, especially when compared to host Time 1 results. Overall, all job insecurity scores were high. Examining confidence intervals of these scores, Table 7.8 shows that at Time 2, job insecurity mean scores for SWP staff (5.98; CI: 5.62-6.34) were not significantly higher than those observed in the host (5.94; CI:5.70-6.18) and comparison sites (5.69: 5.45-5.93). However, they were significantly higher than those found at baseline in the host sites.

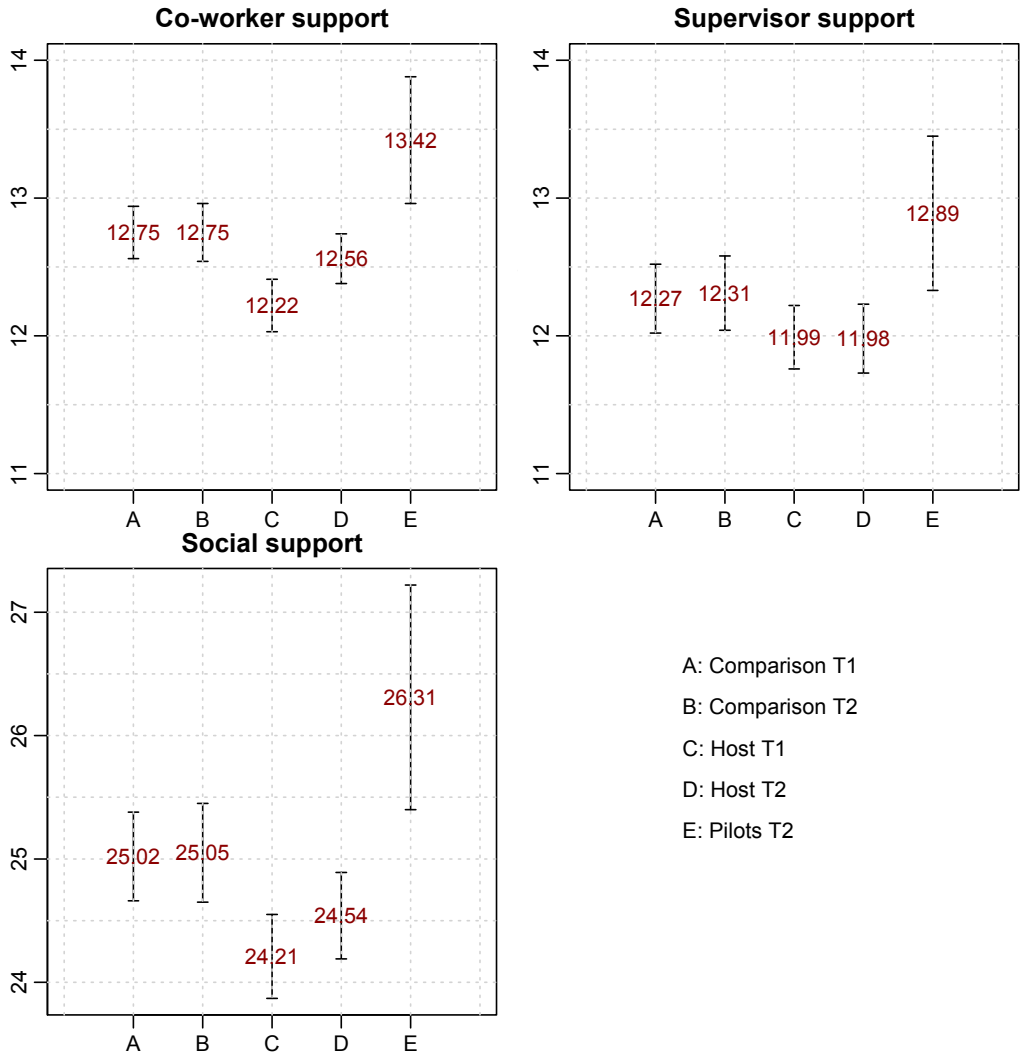
Table 7.5 Karasek job insecurity scores by site groups and over time

Job insecurity score	Comparison Site		Host Local Authority		SWP Pilot	All	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Mean ($\bar{X}$)	5.59	5.69	5.43	5.94	5.98	5.51	5.84
S.d. (σ)	2.18	2.17	2.41	2.37	1.39	2.3	2.23
n=	364	313	398	382	55	762	750
CI upper	5.81	5.93	5.67	6.18	6.34	5.67	6.00
CI lower	5.37	5.45	5.19	5.70	5.62	5.35	5.68

JCQ: Social Support

This social support scale combines both co-workers' and supervisory support scales. Figure 7.1 indicates that social support scores were not significantly different between host and comparison groups and change very little within each group from Time 1 to Time 2. However, social support scores were significantly higher among SWP participants. The overall social support score for all participants at Time 2 was 24.9, which is slightly lower than the norm for other social workers in the Karasek model; but in the SWPs it was identical to the norm (26.3; Karasek 1985).These findings are consistent with the significantly higher levels of agreement about the priority of supervision among SWP pilot staff when compared to both host and comparison groups (See Table 7.5).

Figure 7.1 Karasek scores and confidence intervals of social support by site groups and time



7.7.5 Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

One definition of burnout is the exhaustion resulting from excessive demands on energy and resources (Lee and Ashforth 1990). The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach and Jackson 1984) is the most widely used measure of burnout. This 22-item, 6-point anchored Likert scale has four components: 'emotional exhaustion' (the depletion of emotional resources, leading workers to feel unable to give of themselves at a psychological level); 'depersonalisation' (negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about clients); and reduced 'personal accomplishment' (evaluating oneself negatively, particularly with regard to work with clients)[21].

[21] Emotional Exhaustion (EE): assesses feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. Depersonalisation (Dp): measures an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's service, care or instructions. Personal Accomplishment (PA): assesses feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people.

A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalisation subscales and a low score on the Personal Accomplishment subscale. Scales are computed separately and cannot be combined to form a single scale.

7.7.6 Emotional Exhaustion (EE)

Figure 2 and Table 1 in Appendix 6 show that levels of Emotional Exhaustion for all groups of participants and over time were within the 'average' levels of burnout (the middle range for social services is 17-27; Maslach et al. 1996). The results of the mixed-effects model indicated that negligible proportions of variance were attributed to site and time effects (0.7% each); with no significant differences between pilot, host and comparison groups. However, higher job and employer satisfaction and feelings of spending the right amount of time in direct work both significantly reduced participants' levels of emotional exhaustion (ß=-4.34; -0.57; -1.39; $p<0.001$; 0.002 and 0.007 respectively). On the other hand, being a social worker and the perception that LAC do not enter the system at the right time significantly increased levels of EE (ß=2.30 and 0.86; $p<0.001$ and 0.05 respectively).

7.7.7 Depersonalisation (Dp)

Table 2 and Figure 3 in Appendix 6 show almost no change in Depersonalisation (Dp) scores for participants from comparison and host groups, with levels of Dp significantly higher among the comparison group. What is clearly different is the score of SWP staff, which was significantly lower at 5.6; this may reflect the novelty of their work and enthusiasm about employing a 'new' model. Lower Dp levels indicate a lower level of burnout - the standard 'lower third' for social service is ≤ 5 (Maslach et al. 1996), meaning that all scores from different groups including the pilots were at the average score, while the SWP staff scored on the lower band. The results of mixed-effect models (see Table 2, Appendix 6) confirmed that SWP participants had significantly lower Dp scores (ß=-1.29; $p=0.006$); however the results also showed that over a quarter of observed variance in Dp scores was attributable to unmeasured individual site effects highlighting the importance of overall structure and dynamics of the workplace. Other measured variables that significantly improved Dp scores included participants' age (ß=-0.05; $p=0.009$); experience (ß=-0.03; $p=0.05$) and job satisfaction (ß=-1.20; $p<0.001$). On the other hand, men and participants of white ethnicity had significantly higher levels of Dp (ß=0.08 and 0.78; $p=0.003$ and 0.01 respectively). Staff who felt that LAC do not enter the system at the right time had significantly higher levels of Dp (ß=0.89; $p<0.001$).

7.7.8 Personal Accomplishment (PA)

Table 3 and Figure 4 in Appendix 6 indicate that levels of 'personal accomplishment' (PA) are almost unchanged among participants from both the comparison and host groups from T1 to T2, albeit with small upward movements. A sense of personal accomplishment among SWP participants was greater than the others at T2 but the differences do not appear to be significant (Appendix 6, Fig 4). All scores of PA are, however, on the 'middle' range of social services' norm (30-36) (Maslach et al. 1996); therefore, it seems that the slightly higher scores of SWP staff do not mean they have considerably higher PA. The results of the mixed-effects model (see Table 3, Appendix 6) indicate that the proportion of variance attributable to unmeasured site and time effects was negligible (1%). The model indicates that older participants, those with higher job satisfaction and those who feel that they spend the right amount of time in direct work with LAC all have significantly higher PA scores (ß=0.05, 1.78 and 0.67; $p=0.001$, <0.001 and 0.06 respectively). Being of white ethnicity or being a social worker significantly reduced PA scores (ß=-0.09 and -1.78; $p=0.03$ and <0.001 respectively.

7.8 Overview of Impact on the Workforce

Some of the findings reported in this chapter related to all participants and appear consistent with changes to the image, status and perception of children's social work in England from 2009 to 2012. The surveys revealed differences between participants but also similarities. Chief among these perhaps is the finding that decision latitude did not greatly differ between SWP staff and others.

All findings also need to be seen in the context of variations between participants related to the staffing of the SWPs. Notable is the lower proportion of staff who are social work qualified in the SWP sites compared with those from host and comparison sites. Social workers tended to score higher on psychological job demand than non-social workers. In local authorities therefore, higher numbers of social workers with responsibilities for child protection work are likely to make for raised levels of pressure in Children's Services teams. However, SWP participants tended to agree more with positive statements about their work. There are a number of possible explanations for such observations, including the 'Hawthorne effect' (McCarney et al. 2007) which entails improved performance in groups that are the objects of study; the shorter life span of the pilots, limiting exposure to workplace problems; as well as SWPs being conducive to positive work experiences, in particular, making a reality of peer and supervisory social support. This latter factor may be protective; SWP workers had lower levels of depersonalisation than staff in host and comparison sites.

Our findings point to the potential for reform to concentrate further on the expenditure of time with LAC and birth families and carers; not simply because of the outcomes of such engagement but also because such use of time seems to play a part in reducing social workers' emotional exhaustion. Team and supervisory support emerged as being higher among SWP staff. Interestingly, the findings do not suggest that support from colleagues could compensate for lack of supervisory support; the SWP staff were more likely to report that both types of support were higher than the others surveyed and it is this that contributed to higher social support. There may be other influences at play; in Chapter 2 we noted that the SWPs received substantial external support with their professional practice and training, as well as help with set up; this needs to be acknowledged and successor SWPs may not be so advantaged.

These findings point to some differences between the SWP and host and comparison sites; however, some findings were similar, notably feelings of job insecurity. By their nature, SWPs and other outsourced local authority services are likely to give rise to some insecurity around contracts which involve negotiations and renewals; although for some of the pilot staff there were various 'insulating factors', such as remaining within local authority employment. Finally, having a ring-fenced cohort of LAC and young people eased pressure on SWP staff considerably, as reported in the interviews; this point may underpin feelings concerning the space for direct work with LAC, birth families and carers that were communicated in the surveys.

Chapter 7 Summary Points

- The practitioners' survey was completed by large numbers of staff in SWP pilot, host authorities and comparison sites. The staff profile of the SWP pilots was different to that of the survey participants from the host and comparison sites in that fewer of them were professionally qualified social workers.

- Insecurity scores were high overall and slightly, but not significantly, higher among SWP staff. This may reflect the nature of the pilots or the nature of contracting and its inherent uncertainties.

- Measures of work dynamics and staff participation were collected. SWP staff expressed more positive views about being encouraged to undertake innovative practice and that mistakes were viewed as learning opportunities. No survey participants reported a reduction in 'form filling'.

- Psychological job demand is a feature of professions like social work since the work is often demanding or distressing. Scores for this were high among participants from host, comparison and SWP sites and were higher among social workers than among non-social work staff. There were few differences between participants concerning satisfaction with their jobs.

- Social support scores were significantly higher among SWP participants. This applied to peer support and to supervisory support.

- Overall, SWP staff were less likely to express feelings of depersonalisation from their work. This might be expected in a new setting but it may be related to feelings of support within the organisation and the opportunity to work with a defined group of LAC. Earlier chapters have pointed to the value for children of being 'known'; this may also apply to staff. Feelings of emotional exhaustion were not greatly different among survey participants.

- A sense of personal accomplishment was not significantly different between SWP staff and other survey participants in host or comparison sites. Overall, what gives the children's workforce a sense of personal accomplishment is whether a worker feels they have adequate time for direct work with children and young people and if they are older and satisfied with their job.

Chapter 8 - Conclusions and Key Messages

The findings of this evaluation point to considerable dilution or adaptation of the original SWP model in its implementation. Some of the more controversial aspects of the SWPs, such as performance related payments and the concept of a round-the-clock service for looked after children (LAC), have not materialised in practice in all pilots. SWPs have relied on their commissioning local authorities for a range of functions that have included management of placement budgets, out-of-hours services, training, supervision, legal advice and expertise in safeguarding. The close relationship between most of the SWPs and the local authority resembled a partnership rather than a purchaser-provider arrangement or an 'independent SWP'.

Changes in the political and economic context have had mixed effects for the pilots. While the SWPs have benefited from the support available from central government under the Coalition Government, local government spending restrictions have resulted in demands for savings and a reluctance among local authorities to cede control over a substantial part of their budget. Moreover, a rise in the numbers of looked after children and young people nationally has impacted on some of the SWPs.

Verdicts on the SWPs have been mixed with participants in this evaluation identifying achievements and challenges as well as winners and losers in the experience of the pilots. Members of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) for the evaluation who were able to take a national overview of the pilots reflected this wide range of opinions. The professional partnership pilot operating as a social enterprise was perceived to have been particularly successful whereas the pilot that adopted the professional partnership model in the context of a private business was judged to have struggled. There was some disappointment expressed among members of the EAG regarding take-up and implementation of the model with one commenting, '*we all thought there would be this fantastic appetite for SWPs, but there hasn't been*', and another feeling that '*the practical argument has been completely lost*'.

Other EAG members thought that organisational structures were less significant than the '*people doing the job*'. This last point receives some support from the reports of variations in practice between individual workers in the SWPs received from children and young people; parents; SWP staff; IROs and other professionals; the individual variation found in the analysis of care plans and from the similarities in practice identified between pilot and comparison sites.

EAG members and local authority commissioners were also agreed that a *'longer term evaluation that allows for some of the changes to embed and show up...*' would have been preferable. The needs of looked after children and young people are often long-standing and profound; consequently they are unlikely to be resolved by an intervention delivered over two years. Some of the difficulties experienced by SWP B can be attributed to the fact that they worked with a cohort that was, by agreement, a high-need cohort. However, other problems relating to set-up and the partnership forged with the local authority as well as the accessibility of pilot staff were also relevant here.

In reflecting on the methodology for the evaluation and the use of comparison sites, it needs to be acknowledged that the pilots benefited at the outset from capped and ring-fenced caseloads and from the availability of a range of start-up and on-going resources and support. However, they were also subject to pressures similar to those experienced by local authority teams, including difficulties with IT systems, a high volume of form-filling and, in their second year of

operation, SWPs experienced demands from local authorities to increase the numbers of children and young people cared for by their service.

Despite the caveats above, there is some evidence of positive change for children, parents, carers and the workforce that can be attributed to the pilots and this is highlighted here together with messages both for future SWPs and, more broadly, for social work practice with children and families within and outside local authorities.

8.1 Organisational Issues

8.1.1 The Role of the Local Authority

The partnership with the local authority was fundamental to the development and survival of the SWPs who were dependent on local authorities for a range of services, expertise and support. This reliance constrained the autonomy of the pilots to differing extents: in particular, only one SWP had full control over the placement budget. In the light of this, it is difficult to see how SWPs would function were local authorities to move all their children's services out into SWPs as some local authorities are reportedly contemplating. In the case of such a scenario, some of the core functions and expertise of the local authorities essential for the success of SWPs would be lost.

The emergence of the in-house SWP was not anticipated in the original working party report (Le Grand 2007) and appeared to develop as a response to the risks of placing budgets outside the control of the local authority evoked by spending restrictions. There was some indication that this pilot struggled to assert its identity but staff were also positive about the impact of reduced caseloads on the quality of their work.

8.1.2 Commissioning SWPs

This was experienced as an arduous process for all concerned despite the support provided by government appointed consultants. Small groups of social workers who came together to bid for a professional partnership were disadvantaged and dissuaded by the time required and their lack of business acumen. On the whole, larger organisations with the infrastructure to support the bidding process fared better. SWP staff anticipated that, in the current climate of local authority spending restrictions, tendering for SWPs would become more open and competitive and that this would disadvantage groups of practitioners seeking to develop professional partnerships.

8.1.3 The Professional Partnership Model

The two pilots that were most frequently and consistently described by a range of stakeholders as respectively successful and failing were both professional partnerships. That is, they were small organisations run by frontline workers themselves. However, the pilot that was consistently identified as successful was a social enterprise established by a locality through-care team moving out of the local authority, and the other was a private profit-making company run by social workers who already operated a social care business. A key factor distinguishing these two pilots was the closeness and strength of the relationship with the respective local authority. An EAG member characterised the relationship between the social enterprise pilot and the local authority as a '*cast iron*' relationship; the staff who set up the pilot had worked in the local authority for many years and were therefore able to elicit large amounts of support, advice and resources from the local authority. While the private business was provided with

some key start-up and other resources by the relevant local authority, there were a number of dissatisfactions and disagreements concerning the allocation of resources (the SWP staff resented the fact that they were not given control of the placement budget and the opportunity to manage the out-of-hours service; there were difficulties with access to the local authority IT system and files were not transferred). Discussion and negotiation on these issues were difficult in the context of the absence of an established trusting relationship between provider and commissioner.

8.1.4 SWP Finances

While this evaluation did not include a full cost-benefit analysis, local authority commissioners did not consider that the pilots had reduced costs and, in some cases, costs were judged to be higher than those of the equivalent in-house service. It is difficult to envisage how some of the distinguishing factors of SWPs such as autonomy from the local authority, low caseloads and user-friendly buildings could have been achieved without the initial start-up funding provided by government since the costs of providing the infrastructure for the pilots would have been high. The impact of local government spending cuts on SWPs was discernible in decisions to terminate contracts while higher numbers of looked after children led to demands for them to add to their numbers resulting in larger caseloads for some pilots in the second year.

8.1.5 Payment by Results

This was a controversial aspect of the original SWP model that attracted considerable criticism (Garrett 2008; Cardy 2010). In the event, only two SWPs used it and this was in relation to savings on the placement budget rather than outcomes for LAC and care leavers. In only three local authorities were the outcomes for SWP children and young people monitored systematically. It seems unlikely therefore that pilot staff were motivated to deliver a higher quality service by a system of rewards although in the two sites that used payment by results there was clearly an incentive to select cheaper placements.

8.1.6 Round-the-Clock Services

The requirement for SWPs to provide a round-the-clock service was identified as a disincentive for organisations bidding for pilots and impacted on the cost of the pilots. Only two sites were providing their own out-of-hours services by 2012, one of which reported that the service would be unaffordable after March 2012 in the absence of the additional start-up funding. Children and young people reported making limited use of out-of-hours services and, when they did, this usually took the form of informal contact with their individual worker. It was notable that this informal form of out-of-hours contact also occurred in some comparison sites.

8.1.7 Small is Beautiful but Risky

In common with Cross et al's (2010) evaluation of the Hackney initiative, this evaluation found various benefits were associated with small size. Children, young people and parents valued the flexibility and accessibility of a small service where they were known to staff. Small size allowed SWP team members to acquire familiarity with one another's cases and was reported to facilitate decision making. Other professionals also found it easier to 'know' and collaborate with a small team. However, the small size of the SWPs made for a reliance on individuals in key roles such as managers or administrators who were sorely missed when absent or not on site given the lack of capacity to cover their roles. Small size acted to restrict pilots' autonomy with regard to finances since it was agreed by both local authorities and SWP staff that giving

them control of the volatile placement budget was too risky a proposition for a small organisation. Being a small venture also made SWPs risky for staff since reliance on a single contract appeared to explain staff perceptions of threats to job security identified by the practitioners' survey.

At the time of writing (Spring 2012), it appeared uncertain whether small SWPs were sustainable in the long term. The two pilots that were set to continue after 2012 both had plans to grow and diversify.

8.1.8 Time Allocation and Caseload Size

Most practitioners surveyed in pilot, in host and comparison sites, considered that they did not spend enough time in direct work with children and families and that too much time was spent in completing forms and reports. However, pilot staff responding to the survey were more likely than other respondents to consider that they spent the right amount of time in direct work with children and families and they explained this as a consequence of smaller caseloads.

Most of the pilots were able to ensure that their staff had caseloads of less than 18, only SWP C which worked solely with LAC and care leavers aged 16 and over had larger caseloads. Estimating the weight and demands of social work caseloads is a complex matter (see Baginsky et al. 2010), but the evaluation of the Remodelling Social Work pilots (Baginsky et al. 2011) found that reduced caseloads and administrative support released time that pilot staff were able to allocate to direct contact with children and families. It is not inevitable that reduced caseloads will result in practitioners spending more time in direct work with children and families – they might, for instance, spend this time in meetings - but the practitioner survey found that pilot staff were more likely than other respondents to report having sufficient time for direct work with children, families and carers. Likewise, interviews with other professionals, parents and SWP staff themselves found that some described pilot staff as having more time to devote to direct work with children and families.

It is also important to highlight the benefits that can be attributed to an exclusive and concentrated focus on looked after children. With the exception of the in-house team, SWP staff did not take full responsibility for complex child protection cases involving large amounts of court work (although staff in Pilot F were described as taking on some court work in relation to care proceedings that did not involve safeguarding). It was notable that the comparison site where children and young people consistently rated their allocated workers highly and where there was a strong focus on children's and young people's participation was a specialised team working exclusively with looked after children and care leavers. Interestingly, the motivation for staff in SWP F to develop their own professional partnership was attributed in part to earlier experience of working in similar specialist teams within the local authority.

8.1.9 Interprofessional Work

There was evidence from the analysis of care plans and from other professionals that the pilots worked well with a wide range of other professionals and agencies. In some cases, these relationships were fostered by having specialist staff such as mental health or Connexions workers located in the SWP teams.

8.2 Impact of SWP Pilots on Children and Young People, their Parents and Carers

8.2.1 Choosing SWPs

For many (but not all) children and young people the move to an SWP involved disruption in the form of a change of key worker. Most children and young people did not appear to have exercised choice in relation to transferring to the pilots and none of their parents were offered choices about the move. Children and young people interviewed had limited understanding of the role and tasks of SWPs, although awareness was higher when staff had moved out of the local authority alongside the children and young people and would therefore have had greater incentive and opportunity to explain the work of SWPs.

Some children and young people expressed anger about their lack of involvement in the decision and regarded the move to the pilot as yet another change that had been imposed on them. SWP staff also reported resistance from some parents and carers as a consequence of a lack of consultation. It is important that those children selected for inclusion in an SWP are fully consulted about the change, that the reasons are clearly explained to them and that their views are taken into account. This needs to be done on an individual basis; consultation with looked after children's groups is not a substitute for these discussions. This is a key message for those in the process of developing further SWPs in children's or adults' services**.**

8.2.2 Continuity and Consistency

The picture painted by the evaluation is not itself consistent. Interviews with children and young people suggested that pilot children were more likely to have experienced continuity of worker in the last year and staff turnover figures supplied by the pilots confirmed this picture for three of the smaller pilots. However, Pilot C which had substantially more staff, experienced higher turnover, as did Pilot B where there were ongoing difficulties and where staff knew in 2011 that the SWP contract would not be renewed the following year.

Analysis of SSDA903 data showed that SWPs B, C and D were successful in reducing placement change rates for children and young people in their first year of operation. SWPs A and F were less successful in this respect and SWP F's emphasis on securing flexible, low-cost placements may have contributed to higher levels of placement change. Interviews with children and young people suggested that age and suitability of placement were key factors contributing to placement change.

8.2.3 A More Responsive Service?

Children's and young people's accounts showed no differences between pilots and comparison sites in terms of allocated workers' accessibility and responsiveness. Most found it easy to contact their worker, although there were some differences between pilots in this respect. Most were satisfied with the frequency and amount of time their allocated worker saw them, although there were differences between pilots. Likewise, there were no substantial differences found between pilot and comparison sites regarding the quality of children's and young people's relationships with allocated workers or their satisfaction with support. Some staff in both pilot and comparison sites were described as '*going the extra mile*' in the provision of support.

SWP staff considered that shared responsibility for decision making made for speedier decisions (although in some SWPs the introduction of budgetary restrictions was reported to

have limited front-line decision making over time). Carers looking after SWP children and young people were more likely than those looking after comparison site children to feel that the social worker had often been able to take key decisions in the previous six months.

However, children's perceptions of SWP staff decision making were mixed. While most references to instant or quicker decision making came from SWP children and young people, there were also slightly more comments about delays in decision making from pilot children and young people than from those in comparison sites. This may reflect variations in performance between the pilots. Although self-reports of autonomy were high among SWP practitioners, the practitioner survey did not find levels of decision latitude to be higher among SWP staff.

8.2.4 Contact and Birth Families

In line with other research studies, contact with birth families emerged as a key preoccupation for children and young people and their parents. The practitioner survey found that work with birth parents was identified as a difficult area of practice by child and family social work practitioners. Some pilots adopted a particular focus on the needs of birth parents and the facilitation and support of contact. The carers surveyed from SWPs A, D and F were particularly positive concerning pilot staff's work with birth families.

Parents valued staff who acknowledged their needs as well as those of their children and were more satisfied with contact arrangements when they were involved in making decisions about contact. There were examples of SWP and comparison staff intervening to assist children and parents with both the practical and emotional aspects of contact although this didn't necessarily entail increasing the amount of contact. Slightly more children and young people in SWPs appeared to be satisfied with arrangements for contact than in comparison sites, but levels of satisfaction varied considerably between pilots.

8.2.5 Children's Participation

Even in the second year of the pilots' operation, most children and young people had no or very limited understanding of the role and tasks of SWPs; awareness was higher among children and young people in SWP F where staff and children had moved to the pilot together.

SWPs involved children and young people in a range of participation activities which contributed to their personal development and sometimes offered them opportunities to contribute to the development of services. The young people concerned enjoyed these activities and felt they had an impact on their social skills, and sometimes on service delivery. Such participation was not unique to the SWPs as young people in the comparison sites reported participating in similar activities.

IROs were divided as to whether SWPs showed any improvement on local authority practice in respect of children's attendance at reviews. Analysis of care plans showed that most children were involved in reviews and there were some examples in both SWPs and comparison sites of innovative approaches to involving children in these meetings. Children and young people in SWP D were more likely to feel that their reviews had improved since joining the SWP.

8.2.6 User-friendly Buildings

Where a tightly-drawn catchment area made it viable for pilots to offer this, user-friendly premises that offered space and resources that young people could drop in and use as well as facilities for active contact sessions were appreciated by children, young people and their

families. Knowing and being 'known' to other SWP staff gave children and families a stake in SWPs and contributed to a view of the pilots as accessible, personalised services; this perception was shared by IROs and other professionals as well as being expressed by children and parents. A central or accessible location was important as well as attractive décor and furnishings and offices which young people could access without encountering security barriers were particularly appreciated.

8.3 Impact of SWPs on Carers

Carers looking after SWP children or young people were significantly more likely than carers in comparison sites to view the support they received from their child's social worker positively. They also felt better supported by SWP staff in assisting children and young people in the areas of health, education or leisure activities. Carers in SWPs D and F were particularly likely to express higher levels of satisfaction in these respects.

8.4 Impact of SWPs on the Workforce

SWP staff participating in the practitioner survey reported feeling more positive about their work on a number of levels and they were more likely to feel that they spent enough time in direct work with children, families and carers. They also scored lower on depersonalisation than staff from the comparison and host sites, an indication of higher morale. However, this difference was not replicated in relation to other aspects of job satisfaction such as staff satisfaction and decision latitude. They did however report higher levels of peer and supervisor support and this may be linked to their small size.

Nevertheless, the survey findings point to the risks of staff in organisations such as SWPs being affected by job insecurity and this feature of the SWP model seems at odds with an emphasis on continuity of support for LAC. This appears a paradox at the heart of SWPs, in that a new approach aimed at improving continuity is presaged on the likelihood of a change of providers if contracting is to be a reality. Longer term contracts may be one solution but this risks reducing local authority influence over any commissioned organisations. In-house models offer another way forward and longer-term research that examined how this model might develop over time would be helpful in clarifying this.

8.5 Summing Up

The achievements of the SWP pilots can be summarised as increased opportunities for direct work with children and young people; good quality support for carers and small integrated teams offering a personalised service and, in some cases, creative work with birth parents and/or the use of accessible and user-friendly premises. Three of the SWPs succeeded in reducing the rate of placement change for the children and young people they cared for in 2011. However, continuity of key worker was not consistently achieved, particularly since the contracted out nature of the service involved some children and young people experiencing disruption as a consequence of transfer both in and out of SWPs. The lack of information and choice children reported in relation to such changes was concerning. Children and young people in SWPs did not appear to find staff more responsive or accessible than their counterparts in the comparison sites.

A number of confounding factors make it difficult to attribute positive outcomes solely to the SWP model. This is particularly the case given that the SWP model was implemented in diluted form with the dilution becoming more pronounced in some sites where numbers of children and

young people increased during the life of the pilot. SWP staff and other stakeholders identified reduced caseloads as salient and the level of support from the local authority was found to be crucial in many respects. A tight remit and a clear focus on the looked after/care leaver population without responsibility for child protection work also emerged as factors contributing to increased opportunities for direct work.

Although the SWP model's characteristics of a flattened hierarchy and staff involvement in decision making were unevenly implemented, this approach, together with higher levels of supervision, more opportunities for direct work and the sense of being a new and 'special' project engendered by pilots appeared to contribute to SWP staff's positive perceptions. However, higher levels of morale may have been offset by the increased risk of job insecurity in the context of a short-term contracted out service.

8.6 Key Messages for the Development of SWPs

- SWP set-up and operation are facilitated by a trusting relationship between the local authority and SWP providers. This could be promoted by sharing essential details concerning the nature of the proposed cohort, particularly the proportion of out-of-area placements, as part of the tender process. The development of a checklist detailing transfer requirements such as up-to-date case files, functioning IT systems, and so on, would assist both local authorities and SWP providers.

- Some controversial aspects of the original SWP model, such as payment by results and a round-the-clock service for looked after children, have not been consistently retained in the implementation of the SWPs. Since these elements were a source of resistance and concerns about SWPs, continued insistence on their inclusion in the model seems inappropriate.

- It is important that those children selected for inclusion in an SWP are fully consulted about the change, that the reasons are clearly explained to them and that their views are taken into account. This needs to be done on an individual basis; consultation with looked after children's groups is not a substitute for these discussions. Feelings of disempowerment and dissatisfaction might be avoided by ensuring that the possible risks and benefits of a proposed move to an SWP are fully discussed with children and young people on an individual basis beforehand.

8.7 Key Messages for Services for Looked After Children and Young People

- User-friendly buildings can play a vital role in eliciting higher levels of engagement from children and young people who live locally. Children, young people and their families value being recognised and welcomed by staff, sharing information about cases within a social work team, together with welcoming, friendly administrative staff, can facilitate this sense of being known to the organisation.

- Small teams appear supportive and make for a flexible and personalised service. Co-locating specialist staff such as mental health workers in these teams promotes interagency communication and collaboration.

- Reduced caseloads and an exclusive focus on looked after children both have the effect of freeing up time that can be used to improve the quality and focus of work with looked after children and young people and their families. Reduced caseloads also have a positive effect on staff morale.

- A focus on contact and the needs of birth parents reflects the concerns of children and their families and contributes to satisfaction with the service. This does not necessarily mean increasing contact but rather providing the practical and emotional support required to meet the difficulties that are associated with contact.

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Appendix 1 - Evaluation Advisory Group to the Social Work Practices Evaluation

Name	Title	Organisation
Experts		
David Berridge	Professor of Child and Family Welfare, School for Policy Studies	University of Bristol
Amanda Edwards	Head of Knowledge Services	Social Care Institute for Excellence
Julian Le Grand	Professor of Social Policy	London School of Economics
Peter Marsh	Emeritus Professor of Child and Family Welfare	University of Sheffield
Kate Morris	Associate Professor of Social Work	University of Nottingham
Eileen Munro	Professor of Social Policy	London School of Economics
Jayne Noble	Head of Consultation	Ofsted
Consultants		
Louise Campbell	Social Work Practice Consultancy Team	Capita
David Fairhurst	Social Work Practice Consultancy Team	Mutual Ventures
Dennis Simpson	Social Work Practice Consultancy Team	Mutual Ventures
Department for Education		
Richard Bartholomew	Deputy Director, Chief Research Officer, Analysis and Research Division	
Russell Burton	Joint Social Work Unit, Social Work Practice Team	
Isabella Craig	Analysis and Research Division	
Jane Cummins	Joint Social Work Unit, Social Work Practice Team	
Amber Longstaff	Joint Social Work Unit, Social Work Practice Team (2010-2011)	
Dilu Sultana	Joint Social Work Unit, Social Work Practice Team	
Rosanna King	Joint Social Work Unit	
Julie Wilkinson	Analysis and Research Division	

Appendix 2 - Interview Schedule for Children and Young People – Time 1

Interview schedule for Children and Young People – Time 1

- My name is.....I am a researcher, which means it's part of my job to talk to lots of different young people like you who are in care to find out what it's like so that children living away from home now and in the future are looked after as best as they can be.
- You don't have to tell me anything you don't want to and there are no right or wrong answers. We just want to find out what you think.
- Anything we talk about today will be used anonymously (or *'will not be passed on to anyone else'*) for our research, the only exception is if you tell me something which makes me worry you or another young person are at risk of being hurt. In this case I would want to talk to my manager to decide who should be told in order to make sure you are safe.
- Do you mind if I record our conversation using this digital voice recorder. *Depending on age & make a judgement whether this is appropriate - Show them how it works, ask a question and play back, and let them use it.* The only people that will hear it is the research team so we can remember what you have said. We would like to use your ideas and other children's ideas who we interview to write a report. You won't be identified but we might like to quote some things that you might say. Is that ok with you?
- If for any reason whatsoever you don't want to answer a question just say pass, skip, or even shake your head. *And remind child if necessary throughout interview that they do not need to answer if they do not wish to*
- Give them their gift voucher and tick consent form to confirm receipt
- Consent form to be read with them and signed

1. To start the interview

Before I came here today, your social worker told me that you are...years old and that you live here with... *(Foster carers, kin carers etc.)*

1a **Can I just check with you that that is correct?**

1b **I am going to be asking you some questions about you and your life. Is there anything that you would like to ask about me?**

1c **Can you tell me a little bit about you?**

(Note: This Q is intended as an ice breaker and not to collect information about YP so could ask Q's such as 'What sorts of things do you like/dislike?' 'Are you looking forward to the holidays? If they're wearing a football shirt then ask them about their team…etc. anything to warm them up and get them to say something to you)

2. About where you live now

2a **How do you feel about where you're living right now?**

(1- Use happy smiley faces for younger children)

2b **Why do you say that?**

2c **Who else lives here with you?**

- How are you related?
- Who do you get on with the best? Why?
- How do you get on with your foster carers? (if they didn't mention them in Q above)
- Anyone you don't get on with and if so, why?

2d **Did you have any choice about coming to live here?**

(2- On card give options - lot of choice, some, not much, none)

2e **How do you feel about that?**

2f **Where were you living before you came here?** (If at home → go to Q 2h, if they lived in a care placement → go to Q 2g)

2g **Thinking about where you were living before you came here, is this better or worse? Why?**

2h **Do you think that you'll stay here until you're ready to leave home and get your own place?** Probe answer

2i **Do you have any contact (by phone or seeing them) with your own family (parents, as well as brothers and sisters and wider network)?**

(3 - On card give options - most weeks, sometimes, hardly ever, no contact)

2j **If Yes, who helps you to stay in touch with them?**

If No, Why? Is that your choice?

2k **If you wanted to see more or less of them who would you ask to help arrange that?**

3. Help and support at home and in education

3a **Which people have been the most helpful to you whilst you have been living where you are at the moment?**

(Check out when given name of someone if this is foster carer, social worker, parent, sibling, friend etc)

3b **What kind of help or support have they given you?**

3c **Your social worker told me that you were at secondary school/ at [special type of] school / not in school at the moment. Is that right?** (If incorrect, clarify type of school/out of school provision)

(If at any educational institution, including part-time)

3d **What is your school called?**

3e **Where is it?**

Is that near where you are living at the moment or not?

(Probe: whether there is any issue with having moved away from friends, family, support network)

(If receiving out-of-school provision / excluded, etc.)

3f **Why aren't you going to school at the moment?**

3g **What sort of classes / coursework do you have?**

(Probe structure/amount of provision, i.e. what education package they have, if any)

(If no, or very little, education) **What do you do with your time instead?**

(For all)

3h **What do you think of your school (or out-of-school classes, or being out of school)?**

(Probe: whether happy or not at school / or happy with being out of school)

3i **How long have you: been going to your school / had out of school education/ been out of school?**

(If changed school / education provision recently)

3j **Why did you change?**

Who helped you find your new school / organised your new classes / course? (Or for those out of school) **Who is helping you find a way for you to carry on with your schoolwork?)**

3k **Is there anyone who makes sure you go to school /** (or if out of school) **you settle down to course work? Who?**

3d **Is there anyone who would help you if you were ever stuck with your homework or other school work? Who?**

3e **Is there anyone who you would turn to if you had a problem or you were worried about something at school (or to do with being out of school? Who?** (e.g. problem with bullying at school; isolation or falling behind if out of school)

3f Is there anyone who goes to parents evenings at school? Who?

(For those out of school, probe who, if anyone, is taking an interest in their education.)

4. About your social worker

4a Do you have a social worker just now? How long have they been your social worker?

4b How do you contact your social worker?

4c Who would you contact if you needed to speak to a social worker at evenings or weekends?

Prompt:

Do you have any experience of this?

Is there a separate number to contact the out of hours service?

4d Who do you contact if your social worker is away or on leave? Do you have any experience of this?

4e How do you get on with this/your social worker? What is it about them that you like/dislike?

4f How interested do they seem in what happens to you?

4g What kind of help do you get from your social worker?

(4 – Different types of help from Social Worker cards)

4h What other kind of help would you like to get from your social worker?

4i How often do you see your social worker? Does that feel too much, too little or about right?

4j When you see them, how much time do they give you? Does that feel too long, too short, or just right?

4k Does it take a long to get things done or do they get things done quickly?

4l Does your social worker turn up on time or do they keep you waiting?

4m Do they do what they say they will do or not?

4n Do they seem happy in their work or do they seem stressed? In what way?

4o Have you always had the same social worker since you first went into care?

- If no, can you remember how many social workers have you had?
- Were you told each time that you were getting a new social worker? Who told you? What did they say?
- What was it like for you when you got a new social worker? (Pleased/upset/not bothered?)

5. About Social Work Practices

5a What do you know about the Social Work Practice?

If they seem uncertain, explain what an SWP is to them:

"A Social Work Practice is a small group of social workers and other staff who are separate from the council. They are working in a new way with young people who are being looked after away from home."

5b How did you become part of the SWP? What happened?

(Were you asked? Who asked you? What did they say to you about it?)

5c Did you want to be in the SWP?

If 'yes', why did you decide to say 'yes'?

If 'no', how is it that you became a part of SWP anyway?

5d Have you been to the SWP office?

If yes, what did you think of it?

If no, why is that? Where do you normally meet up with your social worker? Is that your choice?

5e Do you think being in the SWP will make any difference?

If yes, what?

If no, why do you think that?

5f Did your social worker change when the Social Work Practice started up?

5g If so, how did you feel about that?

5h When did you first meet your social worker?

- Were you told beforehand that you were going to have a new social worker?
- Who told you and what were you told?

6. About your care plan and review meetings

6a Do you know if you have a care plan? Do you have a copy?

6b Do you know what is in your care plan?

6c Were you asked about what it should say?

6d Do you go to your review meetings to discuss your care plan?

If yes, → move onto 6e

If no, do you have someone who you speak to that represents you at your review? Who represents you? Then → move onto Section 7

6e (5- Mapping out review panel exercise :)

Think about your last review meeting. Then ask young person to place picture characters of who was there around the table them as you talk *(use cut outs or just talk as seems appropriate)*:

Ask:

- When was it?
- Who was there?
- Was it up to you to decide who was there?

- What was it like/how did you feel?
- Were you asked for your opinion?
- Did you understand what they said?
- Did you say what you wanted to?
- Did it make any difference to your life?

7. About your well being

7a **If you ever have a personal problem or worry who would you go to for help?**

7b **If you ever felt that someone was trying to hurt you, who would you go to for help? Why would you choose that person?**

7c **We know that being safe means different things to different people. What does being safe mean to you?**

7d **Do you feel safe? If no, what would help you feel safe?**

7e **Who helps you stay safe?**

7f **What would keep you even safer than you are already?**

7g **Can you remember the last time that you didn't feel very well?**

- When was that?
- Who looked after you?
- If you felt unwell again, who would you look after you?

8. Leisure activities and hobbies

(6 - Interests and activities sheet)

8a **What do you like to do in your spare time?**

Prompt:

If they are struggling to think of things they like to do, say some of the main headings from the activity sheet to help them:

Do you like...?

- Sports

- Art
- Music
- TV/films
- Computers
- Reading

We want to find out if they engage in the social inclusion activities under 'Doing things with my friends' on the activity sheet. If they do not mention these activities voluntarily then go to Q 8b →

8b You haven't mentioned whether you like to do things with your friends or if you go to your friends houses. Can you tell me if you do these sorts of things?

8c Does anyone support/help you to do these things?

(such as providing transport, encouragement, pay for activities etc)

8d Is there anything else you would like to do that you don't do already? Why is that?

9. The interview

9a Who invited you to do this interview?

9b Why did you agree to be interviewed?

9c How do you feel about this interview?

<u>Prompt:</u>

What was the good thing about doing it?

What was not so good about it?

9d We would like to get in touch with you again in about a year's time to see if you are happy to talk to us again at that stage. Please can we have your contact details so we can get in touch? As with today, it will be entirely up to you if you want to talk to us or not.

If they are happy for us to contact them, ask them to fill in the contact details sheet for them and/or someone they know they will be in touch with in a years time.

9e We're coming to the end of the interview. Is there anything you would like to say that you haven't had a chance to talk about already?

10. Ending the interview

- Thank you very much for speaking to me
- Judge whether to leave the contact number sheet.
- Please accept this certificate which shows that you have taken part in a research project which is working to help looked after young people in the future (hand over the certificate and A4 envelope to keep it in)

Appendix 3 - Practitioners Survey

Practitioners Survey Time 1 – Pilot Sites

NB This is a text version of an on-line form and therefore does not accurately reflect the layout of the form used, which included drop-down menus.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the survey. We would like you to complete it within a week of receiving it if possible.

However, if you can't complete it all in one go, you can save it by pressing the exit button at the top and return to it to complete it later using the same link we have e-mailed you.

After completing the survey, you can enter into a prize draw to win one of the following High Street vouchers: a first prize worth £100; two second prizes worth £50 or ten third prizes worth £25

The survey is in seven sections:

1. General information about your job
2. Your job role and responsibilities
3. The organisation you work for
4. About Social Work Practices
5. Your job and the support you receive
6. About any stress you face at your job
7. About yourself

Please read each question carefully and fill in the answer which applies to you. We would like you to answer all the questions as honestly as possible.

The survey is confidential. This means that your name is not recorded and your own responses will not be seen by anyone at your workplace.

Click on the Next box at the bottom of the page to move to the next question.

Many thanks for your help. The findings from this survey will be used to improve social work practice with looked after children.

SECTION ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION

In this section we would like to collect some general information about you and the job you do.

You have been invited to complete this survey questionnaire because we understand that you work with children and young people and their families in one or more of the following capacities: work with children and young people and families who are subject to safeguarding; and/or you are involved in the process of admitting children to care; and/or supporting them, their carers and their families once they are looked after.

IF you are NOT involved in work in any of the areas above, please tick this box and please still complete the survey

I am NOT involved in work in the areas listed above ☐

What is your grade/level?

Please tell us your job role/title
Frontline Practitioner ☐
Manager ☐

Length of time in years working in social care/work with children.

_____

Length of time in current post.

_____

Do you work
Full-time ☐
Part-time ☐

Please indicate what range your annual salary falls into (if you are part-time, give the fulltime equivalent salary range)

_____

During the past 6 months, have you undertaken any work to cover for another member of staff who was off on sick/maternity leave?
Yes ☐
No ☐

Are you an agency worker?
Yes ☐
No ☐

SECTION TWO: ABOUT YOUR JOB ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Please briefly describe your job role and the main groups you work with.

_____

During the past 6 months, please indicate how much of your time you have spent on each of the following.

	Not nearly enough of my time	Not enough of my time	Just about the right amount of my time	A bit too much of my time	Much too much of my time	Doesn't apply
Direct work with looked after children/care leavers						
Direct work with looked after children's or care leavers' birth families						
Direct work with looked after children's or care leavers' carers/foster parents						
Communicating with other professionals in relation to looked after children or care leavers						
Completing forms and writing reports						
Meetings and reviews						

In your view and judging by your experience during the past 6 months, do you think children in your local authority enter the care system:

☐ Too early
☐ At the right time
☐ Too late

In your view, why does this happen?

_____

Do you think that most children and young people in your local authority wait for a longterm placement?

☐ Hardly any time at all
☐ An acceptable amount of time
☐ Too long
☐ Much too long

How much support do you think that most care leavers in your local authority currently receive?

☐ Hardly any
☐ Some but not enough
☐ An adequate amount
☐ An excellent service

Have you worked with looked after children or care leavers in the past six months?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Your views about working with looked after children

Can you please indicate

In the First column: How strongly or otherwise do you feel YOU have offered each of the following?

In the Second column: How strongly or otherwise do you feel YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY has offered each of the following?

	YOU	YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY
I/My local authority work with the same cases over time and maintain close contact with looked after children/care leavers.		
I/my LA work to ensure that looked after children stay in the same placement or school and maintain contact with family, siblings and friends.		
I/my LA work to ensure that care leavers receive consistent and continuing support through the transition from care to independence.		
I am/we are usually available or can make time for the looked after children/care leavers, carers and birth families I work with		
The relationships between me/my LA and the looked after children and/or care leavers I/we work with are good.		
The relationships between me/my LA and the looked after children's/care leavers' birth family are good.		
The relationship between me/my LA and the looked after children's foster carers and/or children's home staff are good.		
The relationships between me/my LA and the staff in other agencies when working with looked after children and/or care leavers are good.		
I/my LA ensure that planning for looked after children and/or care leavers is effective and follow such plans through.		

Which ONE aspect of your work with children and young people and their families in the past 6 months do you see as being most positive.

_____

SECTION THREE: ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION

How well do you think that the following statements describe the organisation that you work for?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Frontline staff participate in decision making				
Form filling and paperwork are kept to a minimum				
Innovative practice with children and families is encouraged				
Mistakes and failures are treated as opportunities for learning.				
Staff turnover is low				
There is adequate administrative support.				
Staff supervision is a priority				
Staff feel confident to challenge practice decisions				

SECTION FOUR: ABOUT SOCIAL WORK PRACTICES

In this section we want to know your views about Social Work Practices;

These are pilots set up by Government to test whether independent social worker led organisations can deliver new ways of working and better outcomes for looked after children.

Have you heard about Social Work Practices?

☐Yes
☐No
☐Not sure

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements in relation to possible impacts of Social Work Practices on looked after children, practitioners and organisations compared with current practice.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Staff in Social Work Practices will be able to work in frontline practice for longer.					
Social Work Practices will increase the opportunities for children and young people to experience fewer changes of allocated social worker.					
Social Work Practices will improve relationships between social work staff and other professionals working with looked after children.					
Social Work Practices will improve relationships between social work staff and carers.					
Social Work Practices will reduce the amount of time staff spend on form filling and in meetings.					

Do you work in a local authority that is planning to pilot Social Work Practices?
☐Yes
☐No

Are you likely to be directly involved in the pilot?
☐Yes
☐No

SECTION FIVE: YOUR JOB AND SUPPORT YOU RECEIVE

These questions have been used in other research to find out about people's opinions about their job.

Thinking about your current job, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements. You may find that some questions do not reflect your own experiences exactly but please choose the ONE option that comes closest to your experiences.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My job requires that I learn new things.				
My job involves a lot of repetitive work				
My job requires me to be creative.				
My job requires a high level of skill				
My job requires working very hard				
I am not asked to do an excessive amount of work				
I have enough time to get the job done.				
I am free from conflicting demands that others (colleagues, supervisors, and so on) make.				

Thinking about your current job, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I get to do a variety of things in my job.				
My job requires lots of physical effort				
I have an opportunity to develop my own special abilities.				
My job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own				
In my job, I have very little freedom to decide how I do my work.				
I get a lot of say about what happens in my job.				
My job requires working very fast				

Thinking about your current job, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor (line manager) is concerned about the welfare of those under him/her.				
My supervisor (line manager) pays attention to what I am saying.				
My supervisor (line manager) is helpful in getting the job done.				
My supervisor (line manager) is successful in getting people to work together.				
People I work with are competent at doing their job.				
The people I work with take a personal interest in me.				
The people I work with are friendly.				
The people I work with are helpful in getting the job done.				

YOUR JOB SECURITY

These questions have been used to measure job security in other studies. You may find that some questions do not reflect your own experiences exactly but please choose the ONE option that comes closest to your experiences.

How steady is your work?
☐Regular and steady
☐Seasonal
☐Frequent layoffs
☐Both seasonal and frequent layoffs
☐Other (please specify)
Other (please specify)

My job security is good.
☐Strongly Disagree
☐Disagree
☐Agree
☐Strongly Agree

Sometimes people lose jobs they want to keep. How likely is it during the next couple of years that you will lose your present job with your employer?

☐Not at all likely
☐Not too likely
☐Somewhat likely
☐Very likely

SECTION SIX: ABOUT ANY STRESS YOU FACE AT YOUR JOB

The following scale is designed to assess different components of stress and work related burnout.

Please answer all questions by indicating a response ranging from Never to Always.

	How often?
I feel emotionally drained from my work.	
I feel used up at the end of the workday.	
I feel fatigued when I face another day on the job.	
I can easily understand how my service users feel about things.	
I feel that I treat some of my service users as if they were impersonal objects.	
Working with people all day is really a strain for me.	
I deal very effectively with my service users' problems.	
I feel burned out from my work.	
I feel I am positively influencing other people's lives through my work.	
I have become more unsympathetic toward people since I took this job.	
I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.	
I feel very energetic.	
I feel frustrated by my job.	

The following scale is designed to assess different components of stress and work related burnout.

Please answer all questions by indicating a response ranging from Never to Always.

	How often?
I feel I am working too hard at my job.	
I don't really care what happens to some of my service users.	
Working directly with people puts too much stress on me.	
I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my service users.	
I feel exhilarated after working closely with my service users.	
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.	
I feel like I am at the end of my rope or tether.	
In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.	
I feel my service users blame me for some of their problems.	

Overall, how do you feel about your current job?
Please answer on a scale of 1 'terrible' to 7 'delighted.
How happy are you with your job _____

Overall, how do you feel about your current employer?
Please answer on a scale of 1 'terrible' to 7 'delighted'.
How happy are you with your employer _____

If you could change one thing about the way you do your current job what would that be? _____

SECTION SEVEN: ABOUT YOURSELF

This is the last section and it asks some questions about you and your background. This information will help us to see how experiences vary between different groups of workers and will be used only in aggregate form.

Are you
☐Female
☐Male

Which year were you born?

_____

What is your highest qualification level?

_____

In what year did you obtain your highest qualification?

_____

Are you currently registered with the General Social Care Council?
☐Yes
☐No
☐Not applicable

Which of these do you consider to be your ethnicity?

_____**(Drop list)**

Do you consider yourself to have any form of disability (including impairment or long term/chronic health conditions or problems)?

☐Yes
☐No

Over the past 12 months, and compared to people of your own age, would you say that your general health has been:-
☐Excellent
☐Good
☐Fair
☐Poor
☐Very poor

THANK YOU

Many thanks for your help - it is much appreciated.

if you would like to receive further information about this research project please contact:

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University of Central Lancashire
Preston, PR1 2HE
Email: SCHilton@uclan.ac.uk
Tel No: 01772 895462

Tick the box to be entered into the prize draw

☐ Yes

Appendix 4 - The Characteristics of Children and their Outcomes in Pilot, Host and Comparison sites: Using SSDA903 Data

SSDA903 returns are completed annually by local authorities for every child who is looked after and for a group of formerly looked after children (who were in care at age 16) whose nineteenth birthday fell during the same year (from 1st April to 31st March, hereafter referred to as the reporting year). All looked after children and young people and those 19 year-old care leavers (in care when they were 16) who were on the caseloads of the SWP pilots were thus included in these returns. The DfE supplied the evaluation team with these data for our host and comparison sites covering all children looked after during the reporting years 2009 to 2011. The SDA903 returns consist of two types of data. The first is a record of every change of placement or legal status and every review of a child and thus provides a full record of the child's movements in the care system. The second is a set of outcome measures that are effectively a single annual report of relevant data such as whether a child or young person has committed an offence during the year or, for a 19 year old care leaver, whether he or she is in employment. These data have been used to provide a description of the children cared for by the pilots and how they differed from other children in the host authority. The sections below establish what these data can say about the impact of the pilots and we compare performance with the comparison authorities. However, because the 903 returns are collected in March at the end of the financial year, only one year's worth of these data, that for April 2010 to March 2011, was available for the period when the pilots were operational.

Description of SWP Children and Young People

This section describes how the SWP children and young people differed from the looked after populations in the host local authorities. These differences are mostly explained by the process of selection used for the SWPs, the criteria for which differed between the pilot sites as were described earlier. Unless otherwise stated, the groups compared here are those looked after on the 31stMarch 2011.

Age and gender

Table 1 shows that only three children looked after on 31st March 2011 from the pilot sites were aged under 5 years and only two pilots cared for children aged under 10. This emphasis on older children means that the evaluation is unable to show how the pilots would work with under 5s who comprised almost a quarter (23.4%) of children in the host local authorities. Children aged 5 to 9 were included in only two of the five pilots (SWP A and D). Thus, in the main, the pilots worked with children aged 10 and over. SWP C worked only with care leavers and for those still looked after in this authority the children were all aged 16 or 17.

Overall there was a higher proportion of females in the SWP children looked after on 31st March 2011 compared to the host local authorities (47.8% compared to 42.1% see Table 2). This significant difference (Pearson chi-squared p-value 0.011) was found in all SWPs with the exception of SWP F which had a lower proportion of girls than in the host. This difference is mainly due to higher proportions of girls amongst 16 and 17 year-olds in the SWP group.

In Need category of children

There were significant differences in the distribution of children in the various categories of need between pilots and their host authorities (Pearson chi-squared p-value < 0.0001). One difference found was in the proportion of children who entered care because of a disability which was lower in the SWPs although small in host authorities. The category of need that caused most children to be looked after was "abuse or neglect" accounting for 55.7%of all children in the host local authorities and for 59.5% of SWP children (Table 3). Non-pilot children in local authority B had a very much higher rate of the category "absent parenting" but these children were almost all unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC, Table 4) and, once UASC are excluded, "abuse or neglect" was the main category (52.3%) in local authority B, although the pilot still had a slightly higher rate (60.3%) of children in this category. Although generally small, when UASC children are excluded, these differences in the distribution of categories of need are still statistically significant (Pearson chi-squared p-value < 0.024).

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

In Local Authority B, a high proportion of children (39.4% of non-pilot children) looked after were unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) but no children in the SWP pilot had this status due to a commissioning decision that the pilot would not include unaccompanied asylum seeking children (see Table 5). Local Authority C, which had a specialist team working with UASC, also had a high rate of children not in the SWPs who had UASC status (15.8%), but only one child in SWP C had this status (0.5%). In SWPs A and D, there were no UASC but there were only one (0.3%) and nine (1.1%) respectively in the host authorities so there is no statistically significant difference. Finally, SWP F included 6 (8.2%) UASC, a higher rate than in the host local authority (3.5%) though not statistically significant.

Ethnic Origin

Overall, three-quarters (74.5%) of children in the host local authorities were of White British ethnic origin compared to 83.8% in the SWPs (Table 6) and this difference was significant (Pearson chi-squared p-value < 0.0001). With the exception of Local Authority F, the proportion of white British children in pilot sites was higher than in the host local authorities. Authority B again differed with only 34.3% of non-pilot children being White British although 75.3% of the SWP children were White British. When UASC were discounted (see Table 6), the proportion of White British children in this authority rose to 57.3% (95% CI 49.2% to 63.8%) amongst host local authority children but this was still less than the proportion in the pilot site which remained at 75.3% (63.9% to 84.7%), a difference that is statistically significant although the 95% confidence intervals touch but do not overlap.

Length of time looked after at 31 March 2011

The selection process for SWPs led to a focus on those who had been looked after for longer periods although the extent of this varied between sites (Table 7). SWP C focussed on care leavers, among whom about a quarter (24.0%) had been looked after for less than two years compared to 64.9% in the host authority. SWP F was the only other pilot that had a sizeable proportion of children who had spent less than 2 years being looked after (30.1%), although this proportion was still lower than the 52.4% among non-pilot children in the host local authority. Overall, 14.9% of children in the pilots had been looked after for less than two years compared with 57.5% of the host children. On average, children in the SWPs had been looked after for twice as long as those in the host local authorities – a mean of 4 years in the pilots (95% confidence intervals 3.76 – 4.22) versus 2.01 years (1.96 – 2.10) in the host local authorities. This reflects the original intention for the pilots. In particular, SWPs A (71.8%), B (69.9%) and D (77.7%) had very high proportions of children who had been looked after for 5 or more years.

Type of Placement on 31/03/2011

Children's and young people's placements on 31/03/2011 represent their placements at the end of the period covered by these data and thus reflect moves made during the operation of the pilots. The proportion of SWP children and young people in foster care was similar to that of children in the hosts (76.4% and 79.3% respectively). On this date, none of the children from the pilots were placed for adoption (Table 8), this compares to 3.1% of children in the host local authorities although these were mainly children aged under 4 (68.8%). Interestingly, 19.7% of children in SWP A and 17.0% of those in SWP D were placed with their birth parents, a substantially higher rate than in the host authority. However, most of these children had been placed with their parents prior to joining the SWP (Table 9).

Sixteen children (21.9%) in SWP F were staying in residential care, a higher rate than in the host local authority (13.1%). Six of these children became looked after in the period after 31/10/2009 when the SWPs started to operate and four were in foster care on 31/10/2009 and were moved to residential care during the period when they were cared for by the SWP.

Placements outside of the local authority were significantly more frequent (Table 10) amongst children in SWPs (Pearson chi-squared p-value < 0.001 for children placed on 31/03/2011). Only SWP C had a similar proportion of out of local authority placements as did the host local authority, whilst SWP A had only a 4.3% higher rate (45.1% in SWP A compared to 40.8% in the host local authority). For SWPs B, D and F, the rates were substantially higher.

The distance in miles between home and placement was also higher for all SWPs with the exception of SWP A (Table 11). For SWP B there was a substantial difference since only 49.3% (95% confidence intervals 37.4% to 61.2%) of children lived within 10 miles of their home compared to 69.3% (62.2% to 75.8%) in the host local authority and 43.8% lived over 30 miles from their family compared to 15.9% of the host authority. This high proportion of children living at a distance from home may account for the high proportion of White British children and young people looked after by SWP B since, although the host local authority had substantial numbers of looked after Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children, those placed at a distance were in an

area where there were few BME foster carers and therefore White British children were more likely to be placed with these carers at a distance from their birth families.

The proportionate use of private placement providers varied with SWPs C and D having lower rates than the relevant host local authorities (Table 12). The other SWPs had higher rates and this was particularly pronounced in SWP F where 69.9% (95%CI 58.0% to 80.1%) of placements were with private providers, a significant difference to the rate of 31.7% (95%CI 28.3% to 35.3%) for the rest of the authority. Overall, 80.3% of all the children, both host and SWPs, in private placements who were in care on 31/10/2009 were with private providers at that time also (Table 13). However, in SWP F, seven out of 25 children (28%) who were in local authority provision moved to private provision and nine of the eleven children (82%) who entered care after 31/10/2009 were in private provision by 31/03/2011 which is higher than the rates for the rest of the authority where 35 out of 272 (12.9%) moved from local authority provision and 101of 292 (34.6%) later entrants were placed with private providers (Table 14).

Substance misuse

Table 15 shows that SWPs A, C and F worked with a large proportion of the children and young people who had substance misuse problems in each of their local authorities. In the other pilot local authorities, there were few or no reported substance misuse problems in the host local authorities and none in the SWPs.

Effects of the Social Work Pilot Programme

This section considers what these data show about the impact of the SWPs. The SSDA 903 data has a number of outcome measures including whether children have received immunisations; health checks; dental checks; contribution by the child or young person at reviews; and, in addition, we considered the number of children who had been missing from placement in the reporting year. The SWPs did not appear to perform differently from comparison sites on any of these outcomes with the exception of health checks where the pilots' performance compared poorly to that of the comparison sites. Table 16 shows that SWP children were less likely (43% lower odds) to get a health check in 2011 compared to the children with the same characteristics in the comparison sites.

Activity and accommodation at age 19

Except in local authority C there were no or very few young people who had been looked after by the SWPs and had reached the age of 19. This analysis will therefore focus on SWP C. Because the children in the host local authority who were not in the SWP differed substantially from those in the SWP (they had large proportions of young people who were disabled or UASC) the main comparison that can be made is with the authority as a whole before and after, and with comparison site C2 which was originally selected as a comparison for authority C as described in the methods section of the Introduction of this report. For these reasons, the information that can be drawn from an analysis of these data is restricted and a limited analysis is undertaken here.

The proportion of 19 year olds with whom there was no contact was higher in local authority C (13.3% in 2011, 8.3% in 2010 and 13.5% in 2009) than in C2 (2.5%, 5.4% and 5.8%) in all three years. In 2011, SWP C had only 1.0% of 19 year olds who were not in contact compared with 13.3% in the host local authority and 2.5% in C2. It is not possible to know how much this difference between local authority C and the SWP can be attributed to the selection of children for the SWP – in other words, it may have been that those young people with whom there was no contact were not referred to the SWP. The following analysis and tables exclude those young people not in contact. Table 17 shows the activity of the young people in SWP C, host local authority C (excludes SWP children), the local authority C as a whole and comparison site, C2. Table 18 has a similar structure showing accommodation.

Education, Employment and Training at Age 19

SWP C had a lower proportion of non-disabled young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) (26.9%) than the host local authority (34.6%) although this rate was similar to that of the comparison site (23.1%). Similarly, the SWP had a higher rate of children in full-time (17.3%) and part-time (23.1%) training or employment than the host local authority (3.9% in full-time and 3.8% in part-time training or employment) though again these proportions in the SWP are similar to those in C2 (16.9% and 18.7% respectively). Local authority C had a higher rate of young people in education other than higher education (50.0% compared to 22.1% in the SWP and 28.0% in C2).While there were substantial differences found between the SWP young people and those in the host local authority in this age group, these are likely to be due to the differences in the types of young people being supported with local authority C retaining UASC and disabled young people in its care.

The main comparison that can be made is a comparison over time for host authority C as a whole, i.e.by combining SWP and host local authority figures for 2011 and comparing these with figures for 2010 and 2009. Table 17 shows there is little difference between 2011 and previous years regarding the activity of 19 year-olds although the proportion who are NEET is slightly higher (29.5% in 2011 compared to 21.6% in 2010 and 25.1% in 2009). These figures therefore show that the overall performance of the local authority did not change substantially in the first year of the SWP's operation.

Accommodation at Age 19

The major differences between young people in SWP C and others in host local authority C are in the proportions of young people living in independent living (26.9% and 84.6% respectively); supported lodgings (38.5% and 1.9%) and with parents (14.4% and 3.8%). However, once again when the figures for the local authority as a whole are combined there is little difference in the proportions in different categories of accommodation to that found in previous years (Table 18). There has been an increase in the number of young people accommodated in supported lodgings from 27 to 41 and a similar increase in the numbers in independent living (52 to 72) but this is accompanied by an overall increase in the number of 19 year-olds. The proportion in supported lodgings is a key difference between local authority C (as a whole including SWP 19 year olds) and the comparison site C2 (26.3% and 5.1% in 2011), although 2011 saw an increase in placements with former foster parents in C2 (11.0%) which did not occur in local

authority C. So again, overall there are no major changes in the local authority C's overall performance on these issues.

Placement change

One of the key outcomes anticipated from SWPs was greater continuity and consistency for children and young people and this might entail a lower incidence of placement change. To measure the incidence of placement change for children of all ages we counted the number of changes of placement during the reporting period of children looked after on the 31st March 2009, 2010 and 2011. This approach was chosen so that other data collected in a single measure at 31st March could be used alongside data on placement changes to check what factors may have had an impact on patterns of placement changes. The SWPs were established in the six months following 1st of November 2009 and most were not operational with a full cohort of children until early in 2010 (see Table 1 in the Introduction for pilot start-up dates). Thus, data for the reporting year ending March 2009 cover a period before the pilot intervention had begun. The data for the reporting year ending March 2010 are mostly covering a period before the SWPs were operational and the 2011 data cover the period when all the SWPs were operational. Children and young people who were cared for at any time by the SWPs are identified at all three time points, although the SWP intervention did not begin until late in the 2009-2010 reporting year. The following data show the proportions of the children in comparison sites, host local authorities and children who, at any time, had been cared for by an SWP. The inclusion of the comparison site children provides a control group against which to compare changes. We also show outcomes for children and young people from the host authorities not included in the SWPs. Comparison with this group enables us to see whether changes in the SWPs were due to environmental changes within the host local authority. For example, insufficient placement choice within an authority may lead to use of temporary measures and subsequent changes in placements (Munro and Hardy 2006).

Table 19 shows the number of changes of placement of all children in care on 31st March for each of the reporting years 2009, 2010, and 2011. In 2009 and 2010, the SWP children experienced a broadly similar pattern of number of placement changes to that of children in the comparison sites and that of other children in the host local authorities. This is as would be expected given that the SWPs had had little time to work with children before the 31st March 2010. The pattern for 2011 is substantially different. In 2009 and 2010, just under 30% of children who were later worked with by the SWP had one or more placement changes. This proportion fell to 17.5% in 2011. The other two groups did not see such a change. To put it another way, if the proportion had remained at the 2010 level, 162 children would have changed placement rather than the 103 who did, a fall of 59 children or 36% in SWP children experiencing placement change.

There are a number of factors which could account for this difference. For example, it has already been noted that there was a major difference in the ages of children taken on by the SWPs with few young children in the pilots. Previous research has identified that one of the peak periods for placement change is during infancy (Ward et al. 2006; Ivaldi 2000), thus factors such as age have to be accounted for.

In order to investigate how much the reduction of placement changes might be explained by differences in age, length of time in care, ethnicity, and so on between the children and young people worked with by the SWP and those in the comparison and host local authorities a negative binomial regression model on the number of placement changes during each of the three reporting years was developed. This model estimates the effect of various factors on a count outcome with a large number of zero counts. Robust standard errors to adjust for clustering within local authorities were used. Factors found to be independently associated with the outcome were tested in the model and retained if a significant association remained even after adjustment for other important factors. Key baseline characteristics such as age, sex and baseline counts of placement changes and dummy variables to estimate individual site effects were also retained in the model. Table 20 shows the calculations made using the model.

This model shows that children in the intervention group had a 38% lower incidence rate of change of placement in the 2011 reporting year compared to those in the control group of the same age, gender, time in care, baseline number of placement changes and placement provider at 31 March 2011. There were no gender differences in rates of placement changes; however there appeared to be a higher rate of placement changes amongst older children, estimated as a 2% increase in placement changes for every year of age. Time in care appeared to be protective, with a 14% reduction in rate of placement change during the 2011 reporting year for every extra year in care.

In terms of placement providers, children placed with other local authorities, public and private providers had significantly higher adjusted 2011 placement change rates compared to those placed with parents or person with parental responsibility; however there was no difference found with respect to placements in the voluntary/third sector.

Differences between SWPs on placement change

The reduction of placement changes in the 2011 reporting year was not achieved uniformly by all SWPs. Table 21 shows the proportions having placement changes in SWPs and their host local authorities over the three reporting years. SWPs A and F showed no change compared to their host local authorities, whilst SWPs B, C and D showed substantially higher proportions of children who had no placement changes during the year than were found in the host local authorities in 2011.This was confirmed in the statistical model which showed that comparison sites were similar with respect to the adjusted rate of placement changes during the 2011 reporting year. However, SWPs B, C and D had significantly lower adjusted 2011 placement change rates compared to SWP F, demonstrating the heterogeneity in effect in the intervention sites.

Summary

The SWPs' populations of children and young people were not representative of the looked after populations in the local authorities participating in the pilot. The SWP children and young people were older and included a higher proportion of girls which appeared to be a consequence of the focus on older children. Only one SWP included UASC children or young people. In other sites with high numbers of looked after UASC children and young people, this

group was not included in the pilots. SWP children and young people were more likely to be of White British ethnicity than those in the host local authorities; this was particularly the case in SWP B. The SWPs were less likely to include children and young people who entered care because of a disability.

Most of these differences can be attributed to the intention for pilots to work with children and young people who were 'settled' in the looked after system and the 903 data showed that, on average , SWP children and young people had been looked after for twice as long as those in the host local authorities.

SWPs were more likely than their counterpart teams in the host local authorities to be caring for children and young people in placements outside the local authority and living at a distance from their parents. This was particularly evident in SWP B and staff in this SWP identified this distribution of placements as a significant demand on resources (see Chapter 1).

Whilst SWPs A, B, and F had proportionately more children and young people in private placement provision than the host local authorities, SWPs C and D had proportionately less in this type of provision. SWP F appeared to have adopted a strategy of moving children and young people into private provision. This approach was consistent with their aim of reducing placement costs as well as securing more flexible forms of provision (see Chapter 2).

Caution is required regarding what these data can convey concerning children's and young people's outcomes. As noted above, only the first year of the pilots' operation was covered by the 903 data available to the researchers so it is not possible to discern trends. On their own, these data do not provide a nuanced picture of the SWPs' operations and impact; they need to be considered together with the qualitative data reported in the main body of the report.

The SWPs did not perform differently from the comparison sites on a number of outcome measures including numbers missing from placement, children's contributions at review, immunisations and dental checks. Their performance in respect of ensuring that children and young people received health checks was poorer than that of the comparison sites. The analysis was only able to examine outcomes for 19 year old care leavers in one SWP site due to the small numbers included in the figures reported for the other pilots. SWP C had a similar proportion of young people in the NEET category to that in the relevant comparison site. The introduction of the SWP did not appear to have had a significant effect on the local authority's performance in respect of 19 year olds in the first year of the SWP's operation.

An analysis of placement change showed that those children and young people who moved to the SWPs were significantly less likely to experience placement change in the reporting year 2011 than those remaining in the host local authorities or those in comparison sites. When potential influencing factors such as age, gender, and length of time in care were controlled for, this difference remained significant. However, there were substantial variations between sites with regard to this with SWPs B, C and D having significantly lower placement change rates for 2011 compared to SWP F. Placement changes can of course be positive as well as negative and it may be that SWP F's emphasis on securing flexible, low-cost placements contributed to higher levels of placement change. The complexity of such decisions and their outcomes

requires these data to be considered in the context of young people's views on placement quality and consistency as detailed in Chapter 4 of this report.

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Table 1 Age of Children looked after on 31st March 2011

Age in Years	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total	
0	20	15	94	48	41						218	5.2%
1	23	13	94	55	47						232	5.6%
2	20	11	72	44	44						191	4.6%
3	24	6	57	44	39				1		171	4.1%
4	12	11	54	57	29	1			1		165	3.9%
5	14	7	56	30	20	2			2		131	3.1%
6	12	8	49	46	30	1			4		150	3.6%
7	14	10	58	29	27	2			3		143	3.4%
8	17	6	59	48	30	2			7		169	4.0%
9	19	10	67	34	29	1			6		166	4.0%
10	16	12	68	45	25	2			12	2	182	4.4%
11	16	8	69	37	31	1	2		8	3	175	4.2%
12	19	12	83	40	36	4	7		7	4	212	5.1%
13	13	10	114	34	42	3	10		13	5	244	5.8%
14	12	25	107	47	53	4	18		18	10	294	7.0%
15	14	39	147	53	80	14	11		14	19	391	9.4%
16	16	55	103	72	71	16	12	114	16	20	495	11.8%
17	14	54	122	66	45	18	13	107		9	448	10.7%
18										1	1	0.0%
Grand Total	**295**	**312**	**1473**	**829**	**719**	**71**	**73**	**221**	**112**	**73**	**4178**	
Under 5	33.6%	17.9%	25.2%	29.9%	27.8%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	23.4%	
5to 9	25.8%	13.1%	19.6%	22.6%	18.9%	11.3%	0.0%	0.0%	19.6%	0.0%	18.2%	
10 and over	40.7%	68.9%	55.2%	47.5%	53.3%	87.3%	100.0%	100.0%	78.6%	100.0%	58.4%	

Table 2 Gender of children looked after on 31st March 2011

Gender	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
Male	56.6%	64.4%	60.1%	51.7%	58.1%	53.5%	56.2%	50.7%	47.3%	58.9%	57.2%
Female	43.4%	35.6%	39.9%	48.3%	41.9%	46.5%	43.8%	49.3%	52.7%	41.1%	42.8%
Grand Total	**295**	**312**	**1473**	**829**	**719**	**71**	**73**	**221**	**112**	**73**	**4178**

Group	Male	Female	Total
Control	2,101	1,527	3,628
	57.9%	42.1%	
SWP	287	263	550
	52.1%	47.8%	
Total	**2,388**	**1,790**	**4,178**
	57.2%	42.8%	

Table 3: In Need Category of children looked after on 31.3.2011 including UASC

In Need Category	A	B	C	D	F	Host Total	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	SWP Total
Abuse or neglect	60.3%	32.1%	43.1%	81.9%	59.7%	55.7%	64.8%	61.6%	49.8%	79.5%	50.7%	59.5%
Child's Disability	2.4%	4.2%	3.5%	0.8%	3.9%	2.9%	1.4%	0.0%	0.5%	0.9%	1.4%	0.7%
Parental illness or disability	1.7%	1.9%	3.5%	3.1%	2.1%	2.9%	1.4%	4.1%	3.6%	4.5%	2.7%	3.5%
Family in acute stress	7.5%	5.1%	9.3%	2.3%	14.9%	8.3%	11.3%	6.8%	11.3%	1.8%	24.7%	10.5%
Family dysfunction	26.4%	7.1%	23.0%	7.1%	13.8%	16.5%	18.3%	17.8%	29.0%	11.6%	11.0%	20.2%
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	0.0%	6.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%	1.2%	1.4%	5.5%	1.8%	0.9%	2.7%	2.2%
Low income	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Absent Parenting	1.7%	42.6%	16.6%	4.1%	4.7%	12.4%	1.4%	4.1%	4.1%	0.9%	6.8%	3.5%
Grand Total	**295**	**312**	**1473**	**829**	**719**	**3628**	**71**	**73**	**221**	**112**	**73**	**550**

Table 4: In Need Category of children looked after on 31.3.2011 excluding UASC

In Need Category	A	B	C	D	F	Host Total	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	SWP Total
Abuse or neglect	60.2%	51.3%	51.0%	82.6%	61.2%	62.1%	64.8%	61.6%	50.0%	79.5%	55.2%	60.2%
Child's Disability	2.4%	6.9%	4.2%	0.9%	4.0%	3.3%	1.4%	0.0%	0.5%	0.9%	1.5%	0.7%
Parental illness or disability	1.7%	3.2%	4.2%	3.2%	2.2%	3.2%	1.4%	4.1%	3.6%	4.5%	3.0%	3.5%
Family in acute stress	7.5%	7.9%	11.0%	2.3%	15.4%	9.3%	11.3%	6.8%	11.4%	1.8%	23.9%	10.3%
Family dysfunction	26.5%	11.6%	27.3%	7.2%	14.3%	18.4%	18.3%	17.8%	29.1%	11.6%	11.9%	20.4%
Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	0.0%	11.1%	0.9%	0.6%	0.7%	1.3%	1.4%	5.5%	1.8%	0.9%	3.0%	2.2%
Low income	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Absent Parenting	1.7%	7.4%	1.1%	3.3%	1.9%	2.3%	1.4%	4.1%	3.6%	0.9%	1.5%	2.6%
Grand Total	**294**	**189**	**1240**	**820**	**694**	**3237**	**71**	**73**	**220**	**112**	**67**	**543**

Table 5: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children looked after on 31.3.2011

	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
Not UASC	99.7%	60.6%	84.2%	98.9%	96.5%	100.0%	100.0%	99.5%	100.0%	91.8%	90.5%
UASC	0.3%	39.4%	15.8%	1.1%	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	8.2%	9.5%
Grand Total	**295**	**312**	**1473**	**829**	**719**	**71**	**73**	**221**	**112**	**73**	**4178**

Table 6: Ethnicity of children looked after on 31/03/2011

	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Host total	Swp Total	Grand Total
Bangladeshi			1			1	2				1	3	4
Indian	3	10	3		1	5	3	1			17	9	26
Any other Asian background	6	68	13	9	9					1	105	1	106
Pakistani	16	14	2	1	6						39	0	39
African	8	36	68	22	2		1		1		136	2	138
Caribbean		4	3	3	2						12	0	12
Any other Black background		23	2	32					5		57	5	62
Chinese		1		4							5	0	5
Any other Mixed background	5	14	32	23	10	1	3	5	1	2	84	12	96
White and Asian	12	3	3	7	20	2					45	2	47
White and Black African	1		5	14	3			1	6	1	23	8	31
White and Black Caribbean	2	6	10	11	18	1	2	8	5	1	47	17	64
Information not yet obtained			22	40							62	0	62
Any other ethnic group	3	14	165	6	12		1	2		5	200	8	208
Refused			2								2	0	2
White British	237	107	1082	646	632	60	55	193	91	62	2704	461	3165
White Irish		6	5	5	2		5		2	1	18	8	26
Traveller of Irish Heritage			2								2	0	2
Any other White background	2	6	49	6	2	1	1	11			65	13	78
Gypsy/Roma			4						1		4	1	5
Grand Total	295	312	1473	829	719	71	73	221	112	73	3628	550	4178
% White British	80.3%	34.3%	73.5%	77.9%	87.9%	84.5%	75.3%	87.3%	81.3%	84.9%	74.5%	83.8%	75.8%
%White British excluding UASC	80.6%	56.6%	87.3%	78.8%	90.6%	84.5%	75.3%	87.7%	81.3%	92.5%	83.4%	84.9%	83.7%

Table 7: Number of years looked after as at 31st March 2011

Years in care	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Total Host	Total SWP	Grand Total	%
0	95	116	646	192	229	4	1	25		6	1278	36	1314	31.5%
1	71	78	310	201	148	2		28		16	808	46	854	20.4%
2	34	46	172	129	101	9	3	21	2	12	482	47	529	12.7%
3	19	11	98	66	48	3	8	24	11	9	242	55	297	7.1%
4	21	11	63	48	26	2	10	21	12	10	169	55	224	5.4%
5	24	34	94	68	80	26	25	38	43	12	300	144	444	10.6%
6	11	9	43	31	46	8	10	21	13	6	140	58	198	4.7%
7	8	3	16	25	15	3	7	14	9	2	67	35	102	2.4%
8	4	1	11	11	9	7	1	5	4		36	17	53	1.3%
9	5	2	2	9	9		3	7	5		27	15	42	1.0%
10	1		7	16	3	4	2	4	5		27	15	42	1.0%
11	2		7	13	1		2	2			23	4	27	0.6%
12			2	10	1	2		5	4		13	11	24	0.6%
13		1	1	4	2	1		3	4		8	8	16	0.4%
14				5	1		1	1			6	2	8	0.2%
15			1	1				1			2	1	3	0.1%
16								1			0	1	1	0.0%
Grand Total	295	312	1473	829	719	71	73	221	112	73	3628	550	4178	100.0%
% under 2	56.3%	62.2%	64.9%	47.4%	52.4%	8.5%	1.4%	24.0%	0.0%	30.1%	57.50%	14.91%	51.9%	
% 2 TO 4	25.1%	21.8%	22.6%	29.3%	24.3%	19.7%	28.8%	29.9%	22.3%	42.5%	24.61%	28.55%	25.1%	
% 5 and over	18.6%	16.0%	12.5%	23.3%	23.2%	71.8%	69.9%	46.2%	77.7%	27.4%	17.89%	56.55%	23.0%	

Table 8: Placements of children on 31/03/2011

Placement	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total	%
CH not regulated			17	10	5					2	34	0.8%
Children's Homes	12	35	23	22	78	7	6	7	6	13	209	5.0%
Fostered	162	201	1121	573	451	31	62	169	65	43	2878	68.9%
Fostered Rel./friend	66	8	84	113	97	10	1	13	19	7	418	10.0%
Independent living	5	42	70	6	15	7	1	10		5	161	3.9%
Missing			12								12	0.3%
Other residential		1	30	9	6	1	1	9	1		58	1.4%
Parents	31	8	49	83	38	14	2	12	19	2	258	6.2%
Placed for adoption	18	8	54	8	24						112	2.7%
Residential School	1	8	12	2	3	1		1	1	1	30	0.7%
Secure Unit		1	1	3	2				1		8	0.2%
Grand Total	**295**	**312**	**1473**	**829**	**719**	**71**	**73**	**221**	**112**	**73**	**4178**	
Adoption	6.1%	2.6%	3.7%	1.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	
Independent Living	1.7%	13.5%	4.8%	0.7%	2.1%	9.9%	1.4%	4.5%	0.0%	6.8%	3.9%	
Parents	10.5%	2.6%	3.3%	10.0%	5.3%	19.7%	2.7%	5.4%	17.0%	2.7%	6.2%	
Fostered	77.3%	67.0%	81.8%	82.8%	76.2%	57.7%	86.3%	82.4%	75.0%	68.5%	78.9%	
Residential	4.4%	14.4%	5.6%	5.5%	13.1%	12.7%	9.6%	7.7%	8.0%	21.9%	8.1%	

Table 9: Placement on 31/10/2009 of children placed with parents or in Residential care on 31/03/2011

Placed with parents 31/03/11	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
Not looked after	11	3	22	23	15			1			75
Children's Homes				2		1					3
Fostered	3	1	5	6	8			6	1	2	32
Fostered Rel./friend					2	1			1		4
Independent living				1							1
Parents	17	4	22	51	13	12	2	5	17		143
Grand Total	31	8	49	83	38	14	2	12	19	2	258
Residential care 31/03/11											
Not looked after	7	24	52	12	42	2		3		6	148
CH not regulated				6							6
Children's Homes	5	10	6	17	34	6	6	4	6	6	100
Fostered		4	10	3	13			1		4	35
Fostered Rel./friend			1	1	1			1			4
Missing		1									1
Other residential			9	4	1		1	7			22
Parents				2	1				1		4
Residential School	1	4	5	1	2	1		1	1		16
Secure Unit		2							1		3
Grand Total	13	45	83	46	94	9	7	17	9	16	339

Table 10: Placements outside the Local Authority on 31/03/2011

Including UASC	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
IN	59.2%	48.9%	89.5%	66.5%	77.6%	54.9%	35.6%	90.0%	57.1%	52.1%	74.6%
OUT	40.8%	51.1%	10.5%	33.5%	22.4%	45.1%	64.4%	10.0%	42.9%	47.9%	25.4%
Number	**277**	**305**	**1408**	**822**	**715**	**71**	**73**	**221**	**112**	**73**	**4077**

Table 11: Distance in miles between home and placement on 31/3/2011 (excludes UASC)

	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
Under 10	81.6%	69.3%	64.5%	87.2%	52.4%	77.5%	49.3%	64.5%	84.8%	53.7%	69.2%
10 to 20	9.2%	6.9%	22.3%	6.8%	26.1%	15.5%	2.7%	14.1%	6.3%	17.9%	16.3%
20 to 30	4.8%	2.6%	6.1%	1.7%	13.5%	1.4%	1.4%	10.0%	6.3%	9.0%	6.3%
30 to 50	0.3%	3.7%	3.8%	1.5%	4.6%	2.8%	11.0%	6.8%	0.9%	16.4%	3.6%
50 to 100	3.1%	6.9%	1.4%	1.5%	2.2%	2.8%	26.0%	2.7%	0.9%	3.0%	2.5%
over 100	1.0%	5.3%	1.7%	1.0%	1.2%	0.0%	6.8%	1.8%	0.9%	0.0%	1.6%
Not known	0.0%	5.3%	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Grand Total	**294**	**189**	**1240**	**820**	**694**	**71**	**73**	**220**	**112**	**67**	**3780**
Mean distance (miles)	9.4	20.2	12.4	6.0	13.7	7.8	34.4	16.0	7.6	16.2	12.1

Table 12: Placement provider 31/03/2011

	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
Parents	31	8	49	83	38	14	2	12	19	2	258
LA	191	167	1039	505	446	40	21	165	65	20	2659
Other LA	25	6	16	6	4	1		3			61
Other public			4	2	3	1		2	2		14
Private provision	43	131	350	228	228	15	50	39	25	51	1160
Voluntary/third sector provision	5		4	5					1		15
Grand Total	**295**	**312**	**1462**	**829**	**719**	**71**	**73**	**221**	**112**	**73**	**4167**
%LA	73.2%	55.4%	72.2%	61.6%	62.6%	57.7%	28.8%	76.0%	58.0%	27.4%	65.3%
%Private	14.6%	42.0%	23.9%	27.5%	31.7%	21.1%	68.5%	17.6%	22.3%	69.9%	27.8%

Table 13: Placement provider 31/10/2009 for those looked after on 31/03/2011

	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
Parents	22	6	30	67	26	12	2	6	18		189
LA	112	74	543	317	272	43	18	146	68	25	1618
Other LA	8	3	7	1				3			22
Other public			1	2	2			2	1		8
Private provision	38	77	116	135	127	13	52	28	24	37	647
Voluntary/third sector provision	1		3	6					1		11
Not applicable	1	2						1			4
Number looked after on 31/10/2009	**182**	**162**	**700**	**528**	**427**	**68**	**72**	**186**	**112**	**62**	**2499**
Not looked after on 31/10/2009	113	150	762	301	292	3	1	35		11	1668
% of those looked after on 31/10/2009	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**F**	**SWP A**	**SWP B**	**SWP C**	**SWP D**	**SWP F**	**Grand Total**
%LA	65.9%	47.5%	78.6%	60.2%	63.7%	63.2%	25.0%	80.1%	60.7%	40.3%	65.6%
%Private	20.9%	47.5%	16.6%	25.6%	29.7%	19.1%	72.2%	15.1%	21.4%	59.7%	25.9%

Table 14: Placement provider on 31/10/2009 of children in private provision on 31/03/2011

Private providers 31/03/2011	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
Not looked after	11	47	210	78	73	1	1	10		9	440
Parents	1	2	1	6	4			1			15
LA	2	11	30	21	35	5	1	3	2	7	117
Other LA			1	1				1			3
Other public			1								1
Private provision	28	69	106	120	116	9	48	24	23	35	578
Voluntary/third sector provision			1	2							3
Not applicable	1	2									3
Grand Total	**43**	**131**	**350**	**228**	**228**	**15**	**50**	**39**	**25**	**51**	**1160**

Table 15: Substance misuse on 31/3/2009 to 31/3/2011

	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F	Grand Total
2011	5	1	9			12		10			37
2010	2	2	1		5	7		15		4	36
2009		1	2		12			11		8	34

Table 16: Odds ratio for receiving a health check in 2011 comparing children with different characteristics in pilot and comparison sites

	Odds ratio	Robust standard error	95% confidence interval	p-value
Group effect (intervention vs. control)	0.57	0.10	0.41 – 0.80	0.001
Age (years)	0.89	0.02	0.95 – 1.67	0.115
Sex (female vs. male)	1.06	0.12	0.85 – 1.34	0.588
Time in care (years)	0.99	0.02	0.95 – 1.03	0.587
Health check at T1	1.26	0.18	0.95 – 1.67	0.115
Health check at T2	1.77	0.25	1.33 – 2.33	<0.001
Intervention site effects				
A	0.63	0.25	0.29 – 1.37	0.248
B	0.76	0.28	0.36 – 1.58	0.458
C	0.23	0.07	0.13 – 0.43	<0.001
D	0.91	0.32	0.45 – 1.82	0.787
F	0.04	0.01	0.02 – 0.08	<0.001
Control site effects				
C1	0.29	0.13	0.12 – 0.68	0.005
C2	0.52	0.16	0.29 – 0.94	0.030
C3	0.50	0.20	0.23 – 1.08	0.078
C4	0.38	0.13	0.19 – 0.74	0.004
C5	3.16	3.27	0.41 – 24.10	0.268
C6	(comparison)			

Table 17: Activity of young people aged 19

	2011		2011		2010		2009	
	SWP C	Host	C	C2	C	C2	C	C2
Higher education f/t	1.9%	5.8%	3.2%	7.6%	8.1%	3.8%	6.0%	3.5%
Education other than HE f/t	22.1%	50.0%	31.4%	28.0%	33.3%	24.5%	20.0%	17.5%
Training or employment f/t	17.3%	3.9%	12.8%	16.9%	13.5%	21.7%	23.0%	27.2%
NEET disability	2.9%	0.0%	2.0%	3.4%	2.7%	7.5%	0.8%	3.8%
NEET other	27.0%	34.6%	29.5%	23.7%	21.6%	31.1%	25.1%	31.6%
Education other than HE p/t	5.8%	0.0%	3.8%	1.7%	7.2%	0.9%	8.2%	0.8%
Training or employment p/t	23.1%	5.8%	17.3%	18.7%	12.6%	9.4%	14.8%	6.2%
Number	104	52	156	118	111	106	135	114

Note those young people who were not in contact are excluded (SWP 1, Host 23, C2 3 in 2011; C 10, C2 6 in 2010; and C 21, C2 7 in 2009)

Table 18: Accommodation of young people aged 19

	2011		2011		2010		2009	
	SWP C	Host	C	C2	C	C2	C	C2
Bed and breakfast	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.6%
Emergency accommodation	1.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	1.8%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Foyers	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.9%
In custody	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	5.1%	3.6%	6.7%	4.5%	4.4%
Independent living	26.9%	84.6%	46.2%	44.1%	47.3%	42.9%	38.8%	43.0%
Ordinary lodgings	1.9%	0.0%	1.3%	5.1%	1.8%	11.4%	0.0%	4.4%
Other accommodation	6.7%	3.8%	5.8%	0.8%	4.5%	3.8%	2.2%	4.4%
Residential care	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%	5.7%	0.0%	1.8%
Semi-independent	4.8%	0.0%	3.2%	6.8%	5.5%	4.8%	14.9%	6.1%
Supported lodgings	38.5%	1.9%	26.3%	5.1%	24.5%	7.6%	20.9%	12.3%
With former foster	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
With parents or relatives	14.4%	3.8%	10.9%	16.1%	10.9%	12.5%	17.9%	21.9%
Number excluding not in contact	104	52	156	118	110	105	134	114

Note those young people who were not in contact are excluded (SWP 1, Host 23, C2 3 in 2011; C 10, C2 6 in 2010; and C 21, C2 7 in 2009)

Table 19: Number of changes of placement during reporting years 2009, 2010, 2011 all children in care on 31st March

	2009			2010			2011		
All children	**Comparison**	**Host**	**SWP**	**Comparison**	**Host**	**SWP**	**Comparison**	**Host**	**SWP**
0	68.7%	65.2%	71.4%	67.5%	65.1%	70.5%	70.6%	70.5%	81.3%
1	21.7%	23.3%	19.1%	24.4%	25.2%	18.5%	21.5%	21.9%	14.4%
2	6.1%	7.3%	6.3%	5.0%	5.5%	5.3%	5.3%	5.2%	3.1%
3+	3.5%	4.3%	3.1%	3.1%	4.2%	5.6%	2.6%	2.5%	1.3%
	2746	**3039**	**700**	2985	3232	692	3161	3628	550

Table 20: Estimates from negative binomial regression model on the number of placement changes

	Incidence rate ratio	Robust standard error	95% confidence interval	p-value
Group effect (intervention vs. control)	0.62	0.09	0.47 – 0.82	<0.001
Age (years)	1.02	0.01	1.00 – 1.04	0.025
Sex (female vs. male)	1.10	0.08	0.95 – 1.28	0.191
Time in care (years)	0.86	0.03	0.81 – 0.92	<0.001
No. of placement changes at T1	1.01	0.03	0.96 – 1.06	0.669
No. of placement changes at T2	1.24	0.05	1.15 – 1.34	<0.001
Placement provider at T3				
Parent	(comparison)			
Host local authority	0.89	0.13	0.67 – 1.18	0.420
Comparison local authority	1.83	0.37	1.24 – 2.71	0.002
Other public provision	2.27	0.55	1.42 – 3.63	0.001
Private Provision	1.35	0.21	1.00 – 1.83	0.05
Voluntary/third sector	0.73	0.22	0.41 – 1.30	0.285
Intervention site effects				
A	1.14	0.20	0.81 – 1.61	0.451
B	0.57	0.12	0.38 – 0.85	0.005
C	0.78	0.12	0.57 – 1.06	0.111
D	0.52	0.09	0.36 – 0.74	<0.001
F	1.02	0.15	0.76 – 1.37	0.908
Control site effects				
C1	0.59	0.18	0.33 – 1.07	0.080
C2	0.91	0.13	0.69 – 1.20	0.493
C3	0.85	0.17	0.58 – 1.26	0.429
C4	0.82	0.14	0.59 – 1.16	0.334
C5	0.56	0.29	0.20 – 1.56	0.264
C6	(comparison)			

Table 21: Number of changes of placement during reporting years 2009, 2010, 2011 by Social Work Practice and Host

2011	A	B	C	D	F	SWP A	SWP B	SWP C	SWP D	SWP F
0	72.5%	67.6%	67.3%	81.9%	64.0%	70.4%	91.8%	82.4%	89.3%	65.8%
1	21.4%	24.4%	25.1%	13.9%	24.1%	21.1%	6.8%	14.5%	8.0%	24.7%
2	4.4%	5.8%	5.3%	2.9%	7.5%	5.6%	1.4%	2.7%	1.8%	5.5%
3+	1.7%	2.2%	2.3%	1.3%	4.5%	2.8%	0.0%	0.5%	0.9%	4.1%
Number	295	312	1473	829	719	71	73	221	112	73
2010	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**F**	**SWP A**	**SWP B**	**SWP C**	**SWP D**	**SWP F**
0	72.6%	66.9%	64.0%	65.1%	63.1%	72.2%	80.8%	68.7%	69.6%	67.5%
1	21.5%	24.1%	29.7%	21.4%	24.0%	16.7%	14.1%	18.8%	21.4%	19.3%
2	5.5%	4.7%	4.2%	8.0%	5.2%	7.8%	2.6%	6.4%	1.8%	6.0%
3+	0.3%	4.8%	1.6%	5.3%	7.1%	4.2%	2.7%	9.0%	7.1%	8.2%
Number	**274**	**344**	**1148**	**808**	**658**	**90**	**78**	**329**	**112**	**83**
2009	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**F**	**SWP A**	**SWP B**	**SWP C**	**SWP D**	**SWP F**
0	74.1%	67.0%	61.7%	66.7%	64.8%	78.2%	77.9%	67.0%	77.7%	68.2%
1	20.7%	22.2%	28.9%	17.7%	22.0%	14.9%	16.9%	22.9%	12.5%	18.2%
2	3.9%	7.6%	7.4%	7.9%	7.3%	4.6%	2.6%	7.3%	6.3%	7.6%
3+	1.0%	3.8%	1.4%	7.0%	5.1%	2.8%	2.7%	4.5%	3.6%	5.5%
Number	**232**	**370**	**1062**	**747**	**628**	**87**	**77**	**358**	**112**	**66**

Appendix 5 - Account of Statistical Analysis of Carers Survey

Variables

Design and exposure variables:

id_number – id. number of carer

site_number – categorical, 1-12 local authorities

survey_type – categorical, foster carers (1), managers of residential units (2), kin carers (3) and heads of supported lodgings (4)

intervention_site – binary, intervention (1), control (0)

endpoint – binary, baseline (0), endpoint survey (1) observations

child_age_cat – categorical, 0-4y (0), 5-10y (1), 11-14y (2), 15y+ (3)

child_sex_female – binary, male (0), female (1)

child_ethnic_white_british – binary, other minority group (0), white British (1)

child_disability – binary, no disability (0), child has disability (1)

child_eet – binary, child in employment, education or training, 1, 0 otherwise

child_placement_length – continuous, length of placement with carer in days. This had a skewed distribution, therefore was log-transformed for the model (*ln_child_placement_length*)

carer_sex_female– binary, male (0), female (1)

carer_ethnic_white_british – binary, other minority group (0), white British (1)

carer_qualification_cat – categorical, none (0), GCSE/O-level (1), A-level/skilled trade (2), degree/professional (3), other (4)

carer_age – continuous, carer's age in years

social_worker_changes – categorical, number of changes of social worker, none (0), 1-2 (1), 3-4 (2), more than 4 (3), unknown (4)

Variables for the composite outcome – categorical, unsupported (0), not well supported (1), varied/mixed support (2), fairly well supported (3), well supported (4):

physical_health_support

emotional_health_support

disability_support

attends_school_support

achievement_support

positive_acts_support

Composite outcome constructed by dividing sum of categorical values of variables applicable to a carer by the maximum possible sum. For example, if a carer responded 1, 3 and 4 for three outcomes and 'not applicable' for the rest their score is 8/12

Other outcome variables:

social_worker_support – categorical, unsupported (0), not well supported (1), varied/mixed support (2), fairly well supported (3), well supported (4)

key_worker_satisfaction – categorical, unsupported (0), not well supported (1), varied/mixed support (2), fairly well supported (3), well supported (4)

talks_about_problems – categorical, strongly disagree (0), disagree (1), agree (2), strongly agree (3)

Analysis and results

For the composite outcome an ordinal logistic regression model was used. A clustered analysis or hierarchical model would have been suitable since the carers were clustered within local authorities. However due to the small sizes of some clusters such an analysis would give estimates of standard errors biased towards zero increasing the chance of falsely 'significant' findings (see http://www.stata.com/statalist/archive/2011-12/msg00420.html). As a compromise robust standard errors were used. To estimate the effect of the intervention on the composite outcome adjusting for important explanatory variables a stepwise selection procedure was used with 0.049 and 0.05 as the thresholds for returning and removing explanatory variables into the model, respectively. The selected model was tested for the proportional odds assumption (see http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/stata/dae/ologit.htm). However due to the large number of cut-offs (40) and 'matsize' limitations Stata was unable to run the test. New cut-offs were produced by rounding off the composite scores to the nearest 0.05 (*outcome 2*) – the proportional odds assumption was still violated. Finally the composite outcome was reduced to the same number of levels as the outcomes from which it was constructed by rounding off to the nearest 0.25 (*outcome 3*). This time the proportional odds assumption was satisfied. Model estimates are shown below. Where applicable, likelihood-ratio tests are provided in brackets. Odds ratios shown compare odds of reporting better vs. worse outcomes on the composite score and positive vs. negative responses on the binary outcomes.

Table 1: Adjusted effect of the intervention on the composite outcome measuring carer support

Variable	Odds ratio	95% confidence interval	p-value
Intervention	0.91	0.70 – 1.19	0.51
End-point	0.89	0.70 – 1.13	0.33
Intervention-End-point interaction	1.61	1.10 – 2.36	0.01
Child with disability	0.77	0.64 – 0.93	0.01
Carer is white British	0.50	0.32 – 0.79	<0.01
Carer's qualification			(<0.01)
None	1		
GCSE/O-level	0.89	0.65 – 1.23	0.49
A-level/skilled trade	0.57	0.41 – 0.80	<0.01
Degree/professional	0.52	0.37 – 0.72	<0.01
Other	0.83	0.59 – 1.18	0.30
Number of changes of social worker			(<0.01)
None	1		
1-2	0.53	0.44 – 0.65	<0.01
3-4	0.26	0.18 – 0.38	<0.01
More than 4	0.16	0.06 – 0.42	<0.01
Not known	0.30	0.14 – 0.62	<0.01

The adjusted intervention effect is given by the intervention-end-point interaction (see Opondo et al. 2011: appendix, for proof). The final test for proportional odds assumption (null hypothesis - model is a good fit) had a p-value of 0.08.

A similar strategy was used to estimate the adjusted effects of the intervention on the other three outcome variables. None of the ordinal logistic regression models satisfied the proportional odds assumption even on repeated attempts at recategorizing the response levels and eventually the outcomes were converted to binary variables with negative and neutral responses coded 0 and positive ones 1 (*social_worker_support3*, *key_worker_satisfaction2* and *talks_about_problems2*). For model goodness-of-fit the Hosmer-Lemeshow test and area under the ROC curve estimates used – all were satisfactory. Model estimates are shown below. Site 7 has been omitted due to collinearity.

Table 2: Adjusted effect of the intervention on social worker support

Variable	Odds ratio	95% confidence interval	p-value
Intervention	2.65	0.90 – 7.80	0.08
End-point	0.98	0.73 – 1.32	0.91
Intervention-End-point interaction	1.62	1.03 – 2.54	0.03
Child age			(0.04)
0-4	1		
5-10	1.59	1.11 – 2.27	0.01
11-15	1.57	1.10 – 2.24	0.01
15+	1.89	1.16 – 3.03	0.01
Child with disability	0.74	0.60 – 0.93	0.01
Carer is white British	0.56	0.33 – 0.95	<0.01
Carer's qualification			(<0.01)
None	1		
GCSE/O-level	0.94	0.66 – 1.33	0.73
A-level/skilled trade	0.59	0.41 – 0.85	<0.01
Degree/professional	0.56	0.39 – 0.80	<0.01
Other	0.86	0.59 – 1.24	0.42
Number of changes of social worker			(<0.01)
None	1		
1-2	0.55	0.44 – 0.69	<0.01
3-4	0.27	0.18 – 0.41	<0.01
More than 4	0.12	0.04 – 0.34	<0.01
Not known	0.59	0.30 – 1.19	0.14
Site			(<0.01)
1	1		
2	1.37	0.63 – 2.97	0.42
3	1.42	0.76 – 2.67	0.27
4	1.71	0.87 – 3.33	0.12
5	2.10	0.82 – 5.33	0.12
6	2.72	1.34 – 5.49	0.01
7	(omitted)		
8	0.59	0.23 – 1.50	0.27
9	0.68	0.23 – 2.02	0.49
10	0.61	0.24 – 1.58	0.31
11	0.90	0.28 – 2.90	0.86
12	0.23	0.08 – 0.62	<0.01

Table 3: Adjusted effect of the intervention on key worker satisfaction

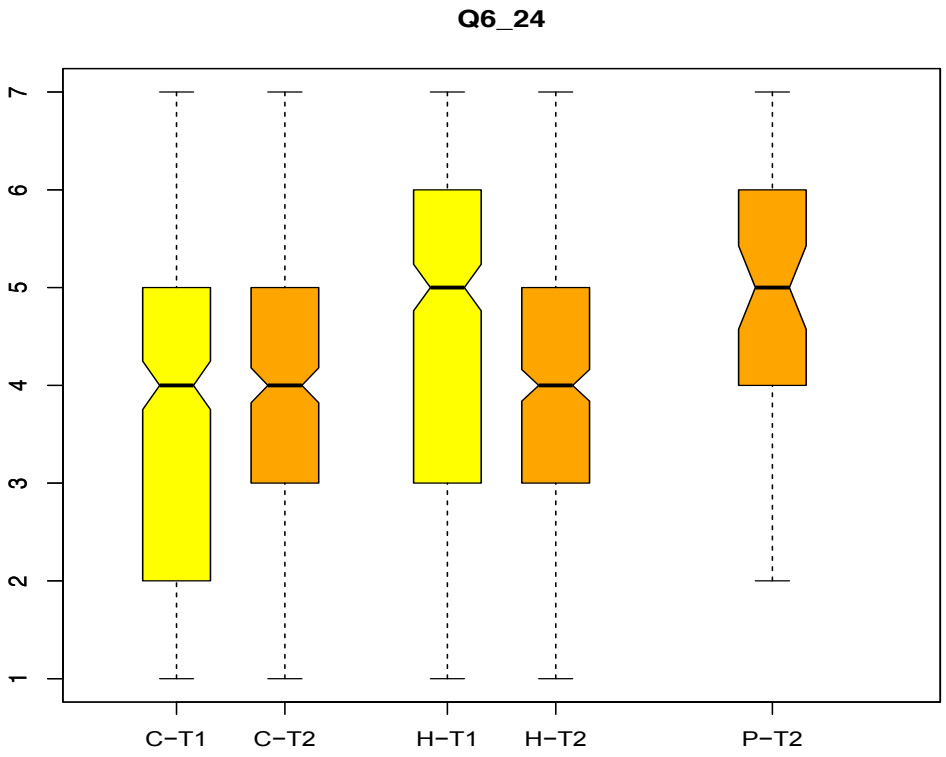
Variable	Odds ratio	95% confidence interval	p-value
Intervention	2.97	0.76 – 11.60	0.12
End-point	1.01	0.75 – 1.38	0.92
Intervention-End-point interaction	0.96	0.57 – 1.63	0.89
Survey type			(<0.01)
foster carers	1		
managers of residential units	0.77	0.44 – 1.34	0.35
kin carers	0.62	0.42 – 0.92	0.02
heads of supported lodgings	0.45	0.26 – 0.76	<0.01
Child with disability	0.70	0.55 – 0.90	0.01
Carer's qualification			
None	1		(<0.01)
GCSE/O-level	0.55	0.36 – 0.84	0.01
A-level/skilled trade	0.48	0.31 – 0.75	<0.01
Degree/professional	0.56	0.36 – 0.88	0.01
Other	0.82	0.51 – 1.31	0.40
Number of changes of social worker			(<0.01)
None	1		
1-2	0.70	0.53 – 0.90	0.01
3-4	0.37	0.23 – 0.58	<0.01
More than 4	0.37	0.09 – 1.48	0.16
Not known	0.70	0.19 – 0.80	0.01
Site			(<0.01)
1	1		
2	0.61	0.26 – 1.41	0.25
3	1.31	0.62 – 2.78	0.48
4	0.71	0.33 – 1.53	0.39
5	0.88	0.32 – 2.41	0.81
6	1.81	0.80 – 4.14	0.16
7	(omitted)		
8	0.42	0.13 – 1.34	0.14
9	0.34	0.09 – 1.25	0.11
10	0.58	0.17 – 1.90	0.37
11	0.52	0.13 – 2.04	0.35
12	0.36	0.10 – 1.28	0.11

Table 4: Adjusted effect of the intervention on talking about problems

Variable	Odds ratio	95% confidence interval	p-value
Intervention	1.03	0.16 – 6.64	0.97
End-point	1.12	0.77 – 1.62	0.56
Intervention-End-point interaction	0.88	0.48 – 1.60	0.68
Child is female	1.50	1.12 – 2.02	0.01
Child is white British	1.57	1.09 – 2.27	0.02
Site			(<0.01)
1	1		
2	0.97	0.24 – 3.99	0.97
3	0.41	0.12 – 1.37	0.15
4	0.41	0.12 – 1.39	0.15
5	0.16	0.04 – 0.62	0.01
6	0.63	0.18 – 2.27	0.48
7	(omitted)		
8	0.68	0.16 – 3.00	0.62
9	0.30	0.06 – 1.48	0.14
10	0.35	0.08 – 1.54	0.17
11	0.31	0.06 – 1.50	0.14
12	0.35	0.07 – 1.70	0.19

Appendix 6 - Chapter 8 Tables and Figures

Figure 1 Box-plots Job satisfaction scores by site group and time



Mixed-effect final models (Decision latitude/ psychological job demand/ emotional exhaustion/ depersonalization/ Personal accomplishment)

Table 1 Maslach emotional exhaustion scores by site group and time

EE scores	Comparison		Host		Pilot	All	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T2	T1	T2
Mean ($\bar{X}$)	24.25	22.47	23.31	22.58	20.05	23.76	22.35
S.d. (σ)	9.7	8.93	10.66	9.99	10.26	10.22	9.59
N	365	312	397	382	55	762	749
Min	2	0	0	0	4	0	0
Max	52	50	51	48	43	52	50

Figure 2 Box-plots of Maslach emotional exhaustion scores by site group and time

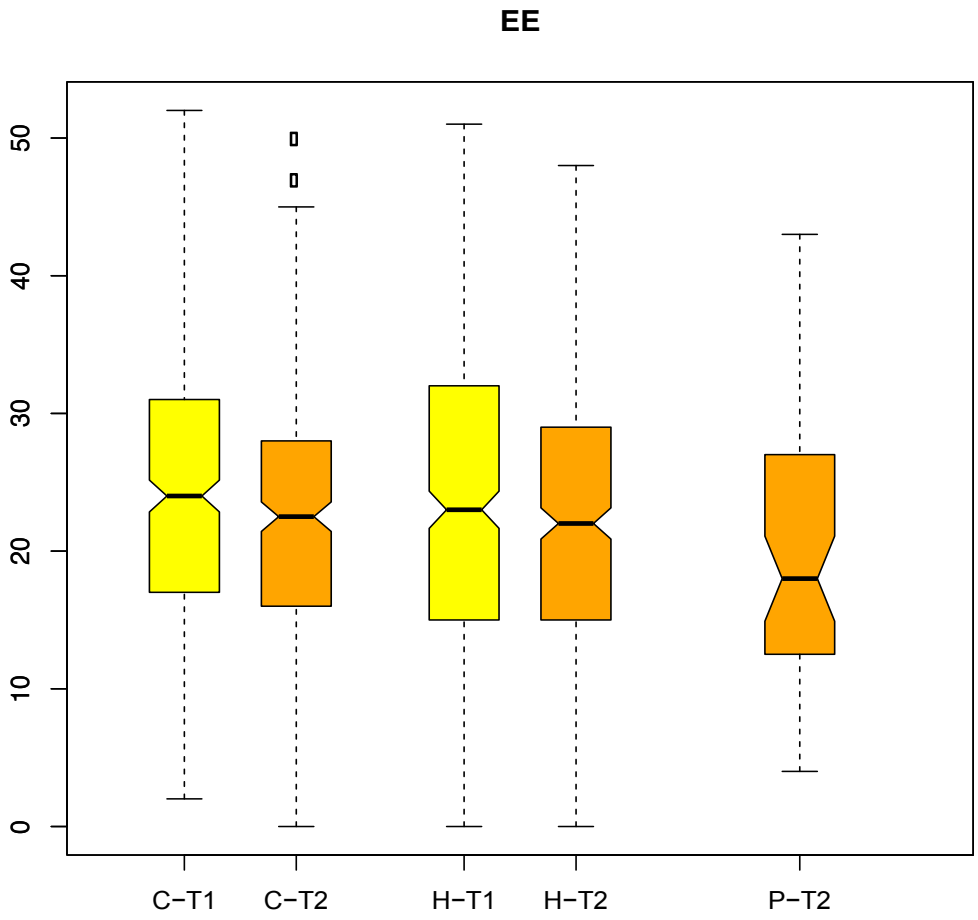


Table 2 Maslach Depersonalisation scores by site group and time

Dp scores	Comparison		Host		Pilot	All	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T2	T1	T2
Mean ($\bar{X}$)	7.22	7.16	6.83	6.66	5.6	7.01	6.79
S.d. (σ)	4.42	4.19	4.48	4.1	4.24	4.45	4.16
N	365	312	397	382	55	762	749
Min	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Max	23	18	22	20	23	23	23

Figure 3 Box-plots of Maslach Depersonalisation scores by site group and time

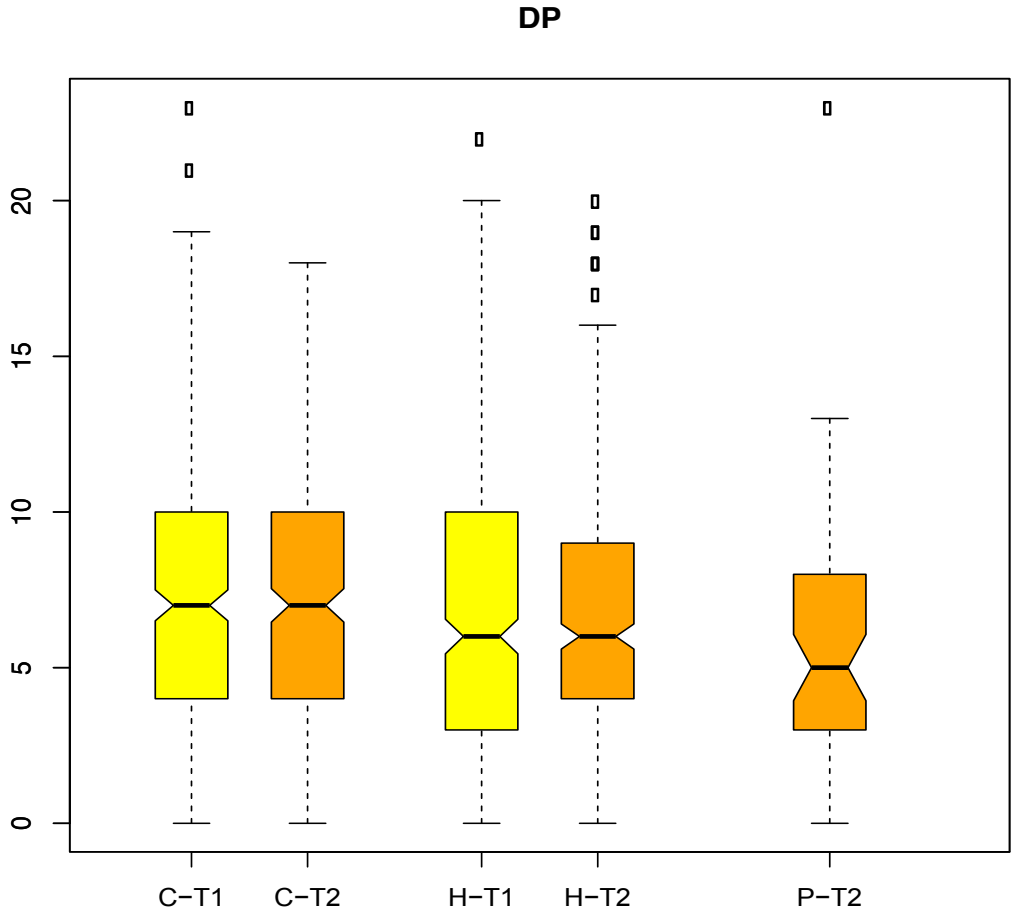
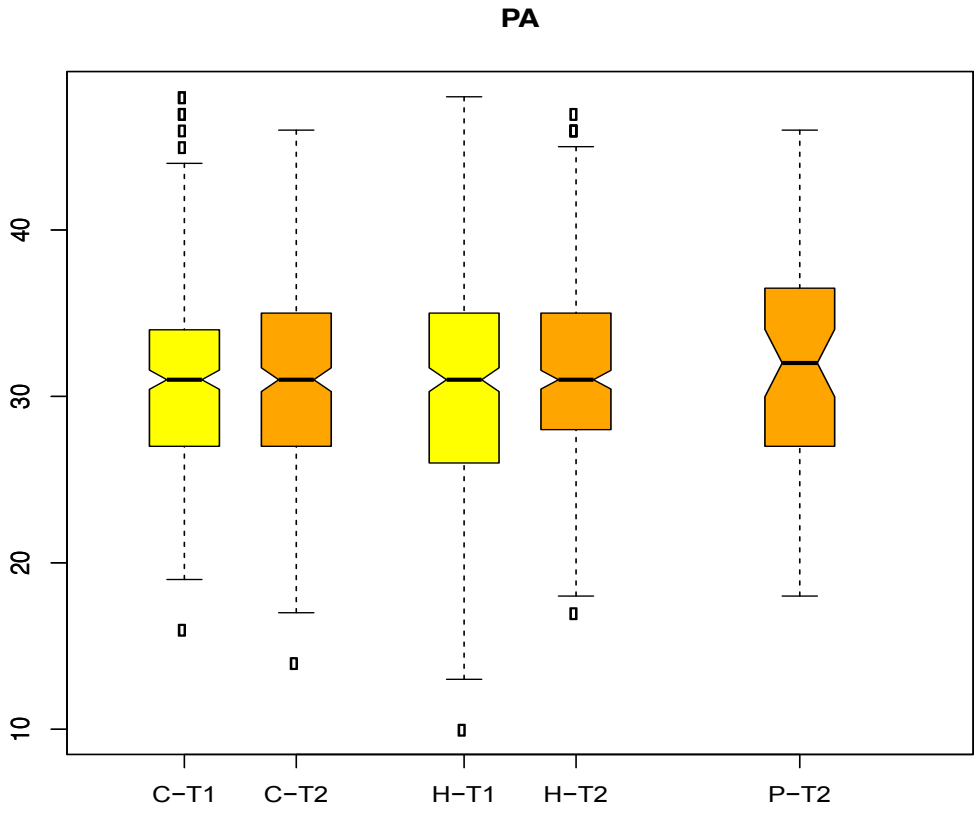


Table 3 Maslach personal accomplishment scores by site group and time

PA scores	Comparison		Host		Pilot	All	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T2	T1	T2
Mean ($\bar{X}$)	30.76	31.04	30.84	31.6	32.8	30.8	31.46
S.d. (σ)	5.49	5.68	6.23	5.4	6.23	5.88	5.59
N	365	312	397	382	55	762	749
Min	16	14	10	17	18	10	14
Max	48	46	48	47	46	48	47

Figure 4 Box-plots of Maslach personal accomplishment scores by site group and time



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